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APPOINTMENTS

28 pages
SECTION 3

Assembly plan angers nationalists

Major seeks elections for Ulster

By NICHOLAS WATT AND NICHOLAS WOOD

JOHN MAJOR announced plans for early elections to a Northern Ireland assembly as a new road to peace yesterday after an international commission said the paramilitaries would never bow to his demand that they give up their guns before being admitted to all-party talks.

But the move, which could lead to elections by May, was greeted angrily by nationalists, who fear that they will be left at the mercy of the Unionist majority in the province. John Hume of the SDLP accused the Prime Minister of buying Unionist votes to stay in office.

The Unionists have made clear that they are prepared to sit down with Sinn Féin — even if the IRA has not given up its weapons — provided all parties have faced democratic elections. And yesterday Mr Major embraced that idea with his plans for an elected body to produce the negotiations for the all-party talks.

Downing Street officials promised that political leaders in the province would be consulted quickly, leading to a summit with the Irish Prime Minister, John Bruton, by the middle of next month. In the Commons, Mr Major suggested that the elections could be held in the spring, but his officials made clear later that a Bill setting up the assembly would not be brought forward unless it had broad support in Ireland. One senior aide said: "You cannot coerce people to the conference table. What the Prime Minister is prepared to do is give it his best shot."

The Mitchell commission's main conclusions and recommendations included:

- No guns to be handed over ahead of all-party talks
- Decommissioning to start in parallel with talks
- Weapons destruction to be monitored by independent commission and those surrendering guns to be granted amnesty
- All groups to renounce violence
- End to all punishment attacks
- People forced to leave Northern Ireland to be allowed to return. Relatives of missing victims to be given information about their whereabouts
- Elections to a new body with an appropriate mandate to build confidence between the communities

was necessary to build confidence a step at a time.

His report urged all parties to commit themselves to six principles of democracy and non-violence, and suggested that "an elective process" could help to create the climate of trust needed to make progress.

Mr Major later told the Commons that he still believed his demand for the surrender of arms was valid, but he accepted that an elected assembly was another way ahead. While he conceded that the nationalists had registered their concerns about the idea, he claimed there was widespread cross-party support for it in the province, and he said: "In a democratic system like ours I cannot see how elections could be regarded by any of the parties as a side issue or as a block to progress."

"We are ready to introduce legislation, and to seek both Houses' urgent approval for it, in order to allow an elective process to go ahead as soon as may be practicable."

Responding to Tony Blair, Mr Major said that the elected body could provide a "pool of representatives" for the all-party talks, with the size of each party's delegation reflecting its success at the ballot box. The assembly could also act as a sounding board for the outcome of any all-party talks.

Conservatives and Unionists applauded the Prime Minister's speech.

Continued on page 2, col 4



Paul Sampson is lifted by fellow pupils at Woodhouse Grove after being picked for the England rugby squad

Schoolboy joins England squad

By PAUL WILKINSON AND DAVID HANDE

PAUL SAMPSON, 18, was in a state of euphoric shock yesterday after being picked for the England rugby union squad for the match against Wales in ten days' time.

Three years ago the A-level student was too small to be likely to be heading for top-flight rugby. But as a late

developer Sampson grew in stature from a slight stand-off half not considered for national under-16 honours into a stocky 12-stone fullback, just an inch short of 6ft, capable of downing bigger opponents during England's senior schools win over Australia last season.

Bath, Leicester and Wasps are all reputedly keeping an eye on a player whose pace

brought him last weekend the Northern Ireland 60-minute senior trial championship, to go with the Yorkshire junior 100m and 200m titles.

His time of 10.79 seconds for 100m made him 11th in the country in the under-20 category.

Roger Howard, coach of the first XV at Woodhouse Grove School, near Bradford, of which Sampson is captain,

said: "I believe he will go all the way in the game."

He will train with England's 30-man Five Nations Championship squad this weekend but is not expected to be included in the team for the Wales match on February 3.

Last night Sampson said: "It hasn't sunk in yet. I just couldn't believe it."

Harman survives as Blair crushes revolt

By PHILIP WEBSTER
POLITICAL EDITOR

HARRIET HARMAN was safely entrenched in her Shadow Cabinet job last night after a fighting Commons attack against the Conservatives and a striking display of Tony Blair's mastery over his party.

The Labour leader crushed a party revolt against the Shadow Health Secretary by telling his MPs that he would not allow her to be "crucified" by the Tories over her choice of school for her son.

He imposed his will on a highly-charged meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party, declaring that he had no intention of yielding Ms Harman's "scalp" to the Conservative Party. His demand for unity lifted his party after the most difficult few days of his leadership and encouraged his MPs to put aside their differences with Ms Harman.

They turned up in force in the Commons to rally behind her as she laid into Tory health policies, and effectively and humorously put down Conservative MPs hoping to exploit Labour divisions over education.

It was clear that she had survived the double ordeal of an initially hostile FLP meeting and the Commons debate because Mr Blair, facing the most serious crisis since he took over the party, put his authority on the line as never before. Not for the first time the support he received from John Prescott, himself angry over Ms Harman's decision, was vital.

Ms Harman's apology to the PLP for any "succour" she had given to the Tories through her decision to send her son to a grammar school Continued on page 2, col 6

Forte moves to buy back hotels

Just one day after suffering takeover defeat at the hands of Granada, Sir Rocco Forte announced proposals to buy back the Forte Meridien, Exclusive and Heritage Hotels. He is also interested in the London hotels previously owned by Forte but now controlled by Granada. Details of the deal were discussed yesterday by Sir Rocco and Granada chief Gerry Robinson. Page 23

Mortgage cut

The Bradford & Bingley Building Society has cut variable mortgage rates from 7.49 per cent to 7.24 per cent. Customers who use the society's direct telephone mortgage service will pay an even lower standard rate of 6.25 per cent. Page 23

Internet Times

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Glimmer of poll hope for Tories

By PETER RUDOLPH

THE Tories have climbed to their highest position in the polls for over two years, even before Labour's rows over the Harriet Harman have had time to affect public opinion.

The latest MORI poll for The Times, undertaken last weekend, puts the Tories on 29 per cent, up one point since early December and at the highest level since December 1993. But Labour retains a huge lead at 55 per cent, unchanged on the month.

The poll was undertaken between last Friday and this Monday, but a MORI analysis shows virtually no difference in voting intentions between those questioned before and after the story broke on Saturday about Ms Harman's decision to send her son to a selective grammar school. The defection by



Emma Nicholson from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats in December appears to have had no lasting impact since support for the latter is unchanged at 13 per cent.

Barely 14 per cent are satisfied with the way the Government is running the country with 76 per cent dissatisfied.

MORI interviewed 1,770 adults at 135 ward sampling points between January 19 and 22.

Judge orders girl 'bride' to return from Turkey

By BILL FROST

SARAH COOK, the 13-year-old who with her parents' blessing "married" a Turkish waiter she met on a family holiday, was made a ward of court by a judge yesterday.

Sir Stephen Brown, President of the Family Division of the High Court, ruled that she should be brought back from a remote corner of southeastern Turkey "forthwith", after a request from Essex County Council's social services department.

The judge said Sarah would not again be allowed to leave the country without the permission of the court.

Jackie Cook, the girl's mother, was en route last night to Kahramanmaraş, where her daughter is being cared for by the parents of Musa Komeagac, the 18-year-old unemployed waiter she "married"

in a religious ceremony two weeks ago. Before she left the family home in Braintree, Essex, Mrs Cook said that, with hindsight, perhaps the "wedding" had been a mistake and her daughter would be better off in Britain.

The judge directed the Official Solicitor and Essex County Council to investigate the circumstances surrounding the case and prepare reports before the matter was next brought before him on Monday.

Sarah's mother and father, Adrian Cook, were also effectively stopped from touring her story to the press. Only details of the affair already in the public domain may now be reported.

Although the British court's ruling is not legally enforceable in Turkey, the authorities

there appear keen to bring the embarrassing affair to a speedy conclusion.

A Turkish court rejected an appeal last night for Komeagac to be released from jail. He is charged with holding a child against her will and having sex with a minor.

A woman from Birmingham claimed yesterday that Komeagac proposed to her 11-year-old daughter a month before he met Sarah. Mrs Corinne Haynes, from Kirt's Green, said the waiter approached Stacy in Alanya, where Sarah met him, during a holiday and said: "I want to marry her. I have lost my heart." Mrs Haynes, 35, said: "There is no doubt that the man who married Sarah Cook is the same one who offered to marry Stacy."

Prince bemoans lack of millennium spirit

By ALAN HAMILTON

THE Prince of Wales, in a stinging criticism of plans to celebrate the millennium, says today that the marking of the new century is in danger of becoming a giant but meaningless party with no spiritual significance.

In an article in *Perspectives on Architecture*, the magazine published in association with his Institute of Architecture, the Prince questions the secular nature of the planned celebra-

tions, doubts the value of the proposed "landmark projects" to be built across the country and calls for far greater involvement by all the faiths.

"The deeper, more fundamental aspects of the millennium are barely being considered. We need to think more deeply about what the millennium means," the Prince says. The message of the turning of the century was that it was a time for renewal. "The concept of renewal is not the monopoly of Christianity, but is

central to many of the great faiths. Everyone, whatever their culture or beliefs, can have a stake in the process which the millennium represents."

The millennium "provides a new opportunity for people to work together with a common purpose. It provides the opportunity to create works of art and to build significant public buildings which will be a genuine reflection of the deeper values of humanity."

He bemoans the fact that most projects submitted to the Millennium

Commission fail to rise above the material. "No one has come forward with plans to erect a great religious building such as the new Hindu temple in Neasden (north London)."

Religious leaders welcomed the Prince's stance. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said the celebrations should have a strong spiritual component because they commemorated Christ's birth.

Millennium storm, page 14

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Blair receives education in vanity of pride

The trouble with Labour is that they start gloating before they've won. Premature triumphalism (the medical term is *exultatio praecox*) is common among politicians. It is thought to arise from wanting something so much that when it comes within reach, self-control is lost. The odious spectacle of a politician's ungoverned flank, triumphantism, cheats the triumph of their triumph.

A famous example occurred at the Sheffield rally, days before Labour were (as they believed) to win the 1992 election. There was much punching the air and arriving in helicopters. "We'll be the judge of that," thought the

voters. It was only when Labour seemed on course to win that the voters resolved to knock them off it. Days before, in an excess of confidence, Shadow Chancellor John Smith had actually told them he was going to put up taxes.

Premature triumphalism has surfaced again more recently. With "new" Labour scoring a famous victory over Clause 4, and their party surging ahead in the polls, the Blairite modernisers begin to assume that the press will feed from their hands, that the public does not wish to know about gaps between preaching and practice, and that the "old" Parliamentary Labour Party can be herded around like sheep by Mr Blair's young



POLITICAL SKETCH

lads and Lassies. "Who cares," reason the modernisers, "where we send our children to school? Mind your own business." Mr Blair starts prefiguring his answers to interviewers with a spoken "Look" and an unspoken "stupid".

Pride. Last weekend came the fall. By Tuesday Blair was in serious trouble at Prime Minister's Questions.

Nobody, however, could call him faint-hearted: he has the opposite problem. On Wednesday he led an audacious fightback, knocking the sheep

into line behind him. That afternoon Harriet Harman carried all before her in a triumphant Commons performance.

Ah! That word again. Did Mr Blair, offering up a prayer of thanks for his deliverance, resolve to tread a little more carefully for a while? Did he heckle by yesterday morning, as he surveyed the "Blair crushes revolt" headlines, the Labour leader became super-confident.

His fightback was now unstoppable. Spitting at adversi-

ty, he would turn it into an advance. At PM's Questions he would actually choose Education for his attack on the Tories.

By no means was this forced on him. The first question was from a Labour backbencher, Barry Sheerman. Thus the PM could be steered off schools (Sheerman chose the CBI) leaving Blair, when he rose, with a free choice of subject.

If Blair had asked about cancer wards and Major had turned his reply to St Olave's school, the House would have felt demeaned, the PM wrong-footed. We would have groined.

But Blair chose schools. Major could not believe his

luck! All those pre-polished killer facts about Labour's education policy and alleged double standards could be used. Revelling in the cheers Major redoubled the attack, more assured with every hit.

This was John Major's best PM's Questions ever. Backbenchers rose to cheer. He left to a display of Order Papers fluttering like flags on a Tibetan temple. Suddenly, the Tory vipers slither over themselves to patronise their leader. In his sourer moods, Mr Major might echo Dr Johnson: "Is not a Patron, My Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a Man struggling for Life in the Water, and when he has reached ground encumbers him with Help?"

Prince wins few allies in millennium call

Church leaders advised the Prince of Wales yesterday against pursuing a millennium crusade to build more churches and mosques. They said that with congregations falling there were enough empty pews. What was needed was a year of spiritual renewal.

Bishop Philip Pargeter, who represents the Roman Catholic Church on the National Millennium Commission, said: "We are much more concerned about looking after the needs of the poor than building a new cathedral. A spokesman for the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain said that their religion forbade them from accepting money raised by the National Lottery. The Millennium Commission insisted its proposals had a spiritual element.

Victims tested for drugs

Adults killed in road crashes will be tested for drugs from July because of fears that life abuse is one of the biggest single causes of serious traffic accidents. The three-year programme could lead to roadside police checks for drug abuse by early next century. Andrew Howard, AA head of road safety, said: "Drivers should remember any drug could have an adverse effect on driving ability."

Police pay £90,000

Clare Roberts, 31, a trainee solicitor, and two photographers, Malcolm Glover and Paul Demuth, both 40, were awarded more than £90,000 by police after alleging assault, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution following an incident when Mr Demuth emptied a tin of marmalade from a matchbox in Soho. The Metropolitan Police denied liability.

Helicopter crash verdict

An RAF helicopter crash in which three teenage air cadets died was "a completely unforeseen and unanticipated event", a coroner said yesterday. Dewi Pritchard-Jones recorded verdicts of accidental death on the victims of the crash, in August 1993, after a two-day inquest at Llandudno, Gwynedd. He praised the resourcefulness of the surviving cadet, Sarah Coker, 19. The three crew also survived.

Tarantula's lottery trick

As lottery fever sweeps Britain with a record double rollover jackpot exceeding £425 million expected this weekend, bizarre methods are being used to pick possible winning numbers. A lemur at London Zoo was given 49 numbered bananas to choose from, parrots have picked out numbered peanuts, and one man picked numbers by letting a tarantula crawl on his payslip.

Youth wins apology

Magistrates, lawyers and police have apologised to a teenager whose eight-month-old conviction for trespass was quashed when it was accepted that another youth had given his name and address. David Watson, 17, of Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, was convicted in his absence by North Shields Youth Court and fined £40 for trespassing on the Metro line. Police have promised an inquiry.

Jet took wrong path

A British Airways jumbo jet tried to land at an RAF base after mistaking it for an international airport three miles away, it emerged yesterday. The empty Boeing 747 was on a flight from Heathrow to BA's maintenance depot at Cardiff but took an incorrect path towards RAF St Athan. The incident came to light when the Air Accident Investigation Board confirmed that it had begun an inquiry.

Russian deal takes root

Gardeners will soon be able to buy seeds by mail order from the Russian Imperial collection at the St Petersburg Botanic Gardens through a deal struck with a British gardening club. The National Plant Club, based in Taunton, Somerset, said the collection, founded in 1714 by Peter the Great, would provide seeds of rare plants never before seen in the West.

Major moves to assure Bruton over assembly

By NICHOLAS WOOD, NICHOLAS WATT AND MICHAEL BINYON

JOHN MAJOR took action yesterday to heal a serious rift in Anglo-Irish relations caused by his backing for an elected body in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister wrote to John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, assuring him that he was not seeking to revive a Stormont-style assembly in which Unionists always had the whiphand.

The letter followed a warning from Mr Bruton against taking "unilateral action" and a claim by his deputy, Dick Spring, that Mr Major was going down a cul de sac. A senior Irish official accused Britain of throwing the Mitchell report "into the bin". According to a ministerial source in Dublin, Mr Bruton had less than an hour's notice of Mr Major's challenge to Sinn Féin and the IRA on Wednesday to disarm or take part in elections. After two years of close co-operation between the two prime minis-

ters, the unity of purpose that had driven the peace process was under threat.

Dublin was furious that Mr Major, without the customary consultation, appeared to be erecting a new precondition to Sinn Féin's participation in full political talks. The source accused him of damaging the peace process.

On BBC Radio, Mr Bruton complained that he had been told only in general terms about Mr Major's initiative. "We cannot have any unilateral decision on a matter of this nature," he said.

But Downing Street denied that Mr Major had tried to "bounce" Mr Bruton into supporting an elected body. Officials said that talk of a rift was "overblown" and that Mr Major had set out the main points of his Commons statement in a 35-minute telephone conversation with the Irish leader the night before.

In his letter yesterday, Mr Major told Mr Bruton that he

wanted to work with him in persuading all parties to honour the six principles on democracy and non-violence set out in the Mitchell report. He said that the sole purpose of his initiative was to get all parties around the table as a prelude to starting all-party talks on the future of Northern Ireland, with which decommissioning of terrorist weapons could run in parallel.

Mr Major and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, sought to calm the dispute by emphasising that Britain was not trying to impose a solution on the conflicting parties in Northern Ireland. They pointed to two roads to peace — agreement by Sinn Féin that the IRA would scrap some of its weapons before all-party talks, or early elections to a body that would supply the negotiators for all-party talks without prior decommissioning. They denied that Britain had rejected the Mitchell report, which has proposed a compromise formula in which all-party talks and decommissioning run in parallel.

Dublin was angry because it believed that the Mitchell report's recommendation that political parties in Northern Ireland should renounce violence would bolster the peace process. Sources said that although the Mitchell recommendations presented a challenge to Sinn Féin, the party might eventually accept them.

Mr Major's plans for an assembly, however, would make it difficult to sell the Mitchell report to Sinn Féin because the party could rightly claim that it was worthless.

Leading article, page 17

Labour highlights nationalist fears

LABOUR leaders yesterday distanced themselves from John Major's call for an elected body in Northern Ireland (Nicholas Wood writes).

In remarks that raised a question mark over the Opposition's staunchly bipartisan approach, Marjorie Mowlem, Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, highlighted nationalist fears that the body might herald a return to the days of unionist domination. In the Commons she told Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ire-

land Secretary, that the announcement had generated a "worrying air of distrust and a lack of confidence".

She asked him to allay those fears by making clear that movement towards such a body would go ahead only with the agreement of all parties. Her remarks came after John Hume, leader of the mainly nationalist SDLP, held a private meeting with Tony Blair to press his point that the Mitchell report was the way ahead.



Lionel Warne, head teacher of White Hart Lane, outside the school yesterday

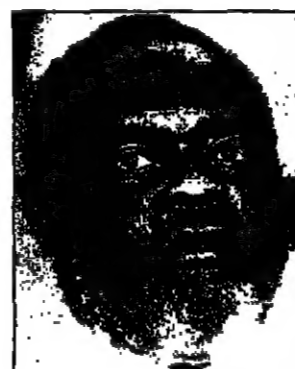
Grant children's school upset at MP's criticism

By STAFF REPORTERS

CRITICISM of his children's inner city comprehensive education by the Labour MP Bernie Grant drew an angry reaction from teachers at their school yesterday. Lionel Warne, head teacher, said the Tottenham MP had apologised for suggesting the school had failed his three sons.

White Hart Lane School, in Mr Grant's north London constituency, has the ninth worst academic record in the country, with 37 per cent of 16-year-olds failing to obtain a single GCSE last year.

Mr Grant is said to have told a parliamentary party meeting on Wednesday morning that he regretted sending his children to a local school. He criticised the standards of education in his constituency and across London, claiming it was a "disgrace". Sharon Lawrence, his part-



Grant was said to be "talking generally"

ner and spokeswoman, yesterday denied reports that he had considered sending the boys to private school. "He's never involved the children in politics and he's certainly not going to now," she said.

"He was talking generally about inner city comprehensives and some of the serious

problems that they have. What he was not doing was particularly targeting that school. He certainly does not believe in private education. He would never have sent his children to a private school."

Mr Grant's 18-year-old son, Jimmy, passed half a dozen GCSEs and is studying three A levels at White Hart Lane, with the help of two hours' private tuition a week at £20 an hour.

Steven, 20, is unemployed, having attended a design course. Jimmy's twin brother Alex is studying catering at Southgate College.

Mr Warne, 53, head teacher for 13 years, said the 83 staff members sent him a letter of protest after an emergency meeting at the school. "I think they are hurt and I think they are quite angry. They do not understand why he should have attacked us or them, or the school."

Divorcé

Continued from page 1 religious faith. The judgment, published by the court, states that Mr David, who belongs to a Sephardi synagogue in northwest London, was summoned to the federation three times at his former wife's request. He refused.

After the final summons in March 1995 he was given a warning that if he persisted in his refusal to comply with the court, he would be formally placed in contempt, or *me'ar*. Mrs David was authorised to publicise the punishment and seek the assistance of the civil courts.

Mrs David, a buyer for a medical equipment company, said: "As far as I am concerned my divorce in the civil courts means nothing to me. I was married through a religious ceremony and the only way I can get out is through my religion."

The case is highlighted in the *Jewish Chronicle* today. Dayan Berei Berkovits, of the Federation, said that ostracism is the equivalent to contempt in a civil court. He said: "We have no means of enforcing this but religious Jews would tend to respect it. It is a very unusual step to take. It will go on until he purges his contempt."

Last year, Jewish women chained themselves to the offices of the Chief Rabbi as a protest against being trapped in marriages that the civil divorce courts have already declared are over.

Dr Julian Shindler, director of marriage authorisation in the Chief Rabbi's office, said: "The Chief Rabbi feels very strongly there are certain situations we cannot do very much about. At the very least we can show, at the communal level, our support for a woman who may be trapped in this situation."

Mr David was unavailable for comment last night.

Business backing for Blair vision

By JILL SHERMAN

THE Confederation of British Industry and two of Britain's biggest companies have given their backing to Labour's idea of a "stakeholder" economy.

Adair Turner, CBI director-general, said yesterday it was vital to ensure that a return to rising real incomes did not lead to a pay-price spiral. Rewards had to be linked to productivity and performance.

"It may sound like a statement of the blindingly obvious or some kind of mythical Utopia. But we must develop a framework giving employees opportunities, prospects and participation in the economy's success, day 1 say, a stakeholding," Mr Turner said.

Sir Michael Perry, chairman of Unilever, says the group has developed the practice of giving employees having a stake in their companies over many years. In an article in *The Times* today, Sir Michael says he has no intention of "wandering far into the pre-election minefield of controversial social ideas" but he points out that "stakeholding" had a well-defined meaning in business theory.

Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays plc, welcomed Mr Blair's recognition of the importance of shareholding. Mr Taylor emphasised that a large proportion of the bank's employees already had a stake in the company. "I think the interesting thing about what Blair is saying is that he is accepting the enormous importance of shareholders."

Unions' welcome, page 26

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Give me the boring life, says literary world's newest star



Atkinson: no strong feelings and no hobbies except TV

By DALYA ALBERGE
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

THE surprise winner of the Whitbread Book of the Year award, Kate Atkinson, won the support of eight of the nine judges for her first novel, *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*. It emerged yesterday.

Ms Atkinson, 44, who is twice-divorced with a daughter from each marriage, has been turned from a struggling writer into a literary star by the £21,000 award. She said: "I didn't sleep last night. I kept tossing and turning, thinking 'My goodness me'. It's a bit unreal."

The chronicle of working-class

Yorkshire life won over the judges despite strong competition from Salman Rushdie's acclaimed *The Moor's Last Sigh* and Roy Jenkins's much-praised biography of Gladstone. Rachel Cusk, the novelist, was among judges who championed Ms Atkinson's cause. She said: "It is a great book, already number five in the bestseller list. Word is getting out."

Another judge, Jane Asher, the actress, felt it was "remarkably good and beautifully written", and Candia McWilliam, the writer, said it made her laugh and cry. Only Julian Critchley, the writer and Tory MP, was convinced that Jenkins should take the prize. He said that he had "struggled grim-

ly" with Ms Atkinson's book but "it wasn't my cup of tea".

The winner insisted that only certain passages of the book were from her own life. A medical and surgical shop was just like one that her parents used to run.

As far as she knows, there are no writers in her family. Her father, like generations before him, had previously worked down the mines around Doncaster.

Ms Atkinson said that she does not feel strongly about anything, so relatively little about herself emerges in either the plot or the characters. "Perhaps I'm beyond strong feelings," she said. Her evenings are spent at home in the "less fashionable" part of Edin-

burgh, watching television. She describes herself as a loner who needs her space and is probably difficult to live with. "I've given up on hobbies. Now I do nothing. I lead a really boring life."

She noted that the press coverage of her win failed to paint an entirely accurate picture, with a little artistic licence they described her as a former chambermaid. However much that enhanced the fairy-tale's happy ending, it was no more than a student job between school and university.

Although her parents gave her a happy childhood in York, she was an "unhappy child", an only child. "I'm just not a cheerful person," she said. "I was quite a

depressive child. I've got more cheerful as I've gone on. Some children are."

They were a close family, yet she does not believe the experience of two divorces has influenced her disillusionment with the family as a vital unit in society. "The family is overrated. We hear so much about the family, especially from the Government, as something that will save society. It argues that the family is the moral centre to our lives. But families are not in themselves natural."

"We were meant to be part of much larger units. Families can destroy the sense of community. Most have failed marriages. More than 50 per cent live in single

households." She argued that children do not suffer with only one parent: "I brought up two happy, well-adjusted children who haven't needed two parents." Her eldest daughter is 21, a student deciding on her career path; the youngest is 15.

After graduating from Dundee University herself in 1974, uncertain of her career path, she was employed as a home help, as a teacher in community education, and as a writer of short stories for women's magazines. Her writing career took off in 1988 when she won a *Woman's Own* short story competition.

Rachel Cusk, page 18

Kit to test children for drugs attacked

By ADRIAN LEE

A MAIL-ORDER swab which allows parents to test if their children are using drugs came under attack when it was launched yesterday.

The marketers of the £32 Drug Alert product, which detects traces of all well-known drugs, denied trying to profit from recent tragedies. Advertising posters will show a dealer standing at the gates of a school.

The parents of Leah Betts, the teenager who died after taking Ecstasy, said the kit should be "used with caution".

The 3 in square swab can be wiped across clothes, furniture, telephones or a child's hands and sent to a laboratory for analysis. Parents are given a confidential report which, if positive, includes advice and telephone numbers for help agencies.

Ken Lodge, managing director of Drug Alert at Chigwell, Essex, said: "This is not spying. The kit can be used covertly, in bedrooms or on storage units, but also with the agreement of the child."

Leah Betts' stepmother Janet, of Latchingdon, Essex, said: "I think it should only be used as a last resort but there is a danger it could become a substitute for a rapport between parents and children."

"I asked my 19-year-old daughter Cindy how she would react and she went loopy. It's a bit like reading your kid's diary."

Sally Taylorson, adviser on drugs in schools for the counselling organisation Release, dismissed the kits as "judicious" and of limited use. "There are a million and one drug organisations in the phone book which will give any parent the advice and help they need," she said.

The kit, which originated in the United States, could also be used in the workplace, according to the marketers.

Fair trial impossible because of 12-year gap since alleged incidents

Judge frees music teacher accused of sex with boys

By JOANNA BALE

A MUSIC teacher accused of giving sexual favours to under-age boys walked free from court yesterday after a judge accepted that although there was a clear case against her it would be unfair to proceed.

Valerie Short, 41, was alleged to have taken part in one-to-one and group sexual encounters with boys aged 13 to 15 from a London youth orchestra that she helped to run. They took place when the orchestra was on tour, after music lessons at her house and even at one boy's home while his parents were in. It was alleged.

"This teacher made herself available to boys. It was widely known among the youngsters she mixed with," Miranda Moore, for the prosecution, told Woolwich Crown Court, southeast London.

But after two days of legal argument Judge Brian Pryor said it would be unfair to proceed with a trial because the alleged incidents took place between 10 and 12 years ago. He accepted the defence's argument that Miss Short would not receive a fair trial because of the difficulties in tracing witnesses and evidence that would back her denial of the allegations.

The judge said that it was clear that none of the three boys who made the allegations had suffered psychological problems as a result of sexual activity "which they had clearly enjoyed". He was also critical of the fact that the allegations were made only after the main complainant, Mr G, attended a two-day

child abuse workshop while studying clinical psychology at Oxford and decided that he should speak out, allegedly to protect others.

Judge Pryor commented: "His reasons are certainly understandable but it isn't something one would have thought that he couldn't have realised for himself long before."

Miss Short, of Blackheath, southeast London, denied five counts of indecent assault against the boys. Pending trial she was suspended from her post as music teacher at the John Roan School, Blackheath, which she joined after the alleged incidents were said to have taken place.

In a statement read out in court one alleged victim, Mr D, described an assault which took place after a violin lesson at Miss Short's flat. "After the lesson Val went into her bedroom and watched television. I came in and lay next to her on the bed and I started fondling her. She didn't make any effort to undress me but she put her hands down my trousers."

Afterwards she allegedly told Mr D: "You are a naughty boy."

The same man alleged that on another occasion he became involved in a group sex session with Miss Short and other boys. Mr D later said: "I did it because I wanted to. I took advantage of her."

Ms Moore explained that although some of the boys admitted to having enjoyed their experiences, it was still an offence for a woman to indulge in sexual activity with boys under 16. She said

shame, guilt and embarrassment explained why it had taken until last year for a victim to contact police, adding: "He became aware of how child abuse affects not only the victim but the abuser and, bearing in mind the position the lady was in, something had to be done."

Judge Pryor said witness statements suggested that when boys reached the age of 15 she lost interest in them and turned her attention to others of a younger age. "The picture that emerges is of a practice that went on over many years," he said.

None of the witnesses was called to give evidence or face cross-examination. According to written statements another alleged incident took place at the home of a pupil, Mr C, during the latter stages of a Christmas drinks party in 1983, while his parents were in the house. One witness, Mr L, described how Miss Short took off her underwear and let several boys touch her intimately.

Other incidents were said to have taken place during an orchestra trip to France. Mr D said in a statement to police: "I remember Val was wearing some outrageously provocative clothes including short shorts. It was always common knowledge within the orchestra that Val was interested in young boys."

Louis French, for the defence, said other adults connected with the orchestra, including the conductor and head of the music department, told police that they were aware of gossip surrounding Miss Short, but never saw any



Valerie Short, whose future with her school was under discussion yesterday

improper behaviour. The head of department had been annoyed by it, he said.

Judge Pryor commented: "I am surprised that head of department's annoyance didn't materialise into anything."

After the case was dismissed Miss Short, in a statement read by her solicitor, Joyce

Hitchman, said: "Miss Short has lived with the embarrassment and distress of these allegations for almost a year. She has always denied them emphatically. She now wishes to be allowed to return to normal life."

Greenwich Education Authority was last night consid-

ering Miss Short's situation at the school. Greenwich Council said: "We set up a telephone helpline to find out more about what Miss Short might have been doing. We did get one call from a parent of a pupil who is still at the school, but they did not want to pursue it."

Husband 'poisoned by dying bigamist'

By KATE ALDERSON

A DYING woman murdered the wealthy businessman she had bigamously married by poisoning his food with a lethal mixture of her own drugs, a court was told yesterday.

Lynn Lowey, 30, a cancer sufferer with between three and nine months to live, is accused of murdering Ian Whalley, 56, her third husband, by poisoning a meal of jacket potatoes. As her husband's body lay undetected at their home, Mrs Lowey laughed to a relative: "No more fun — now I am free."

Mrs Lowey, of St Helens, Merseyside, made a second appearance yesterday before Hutton magistrates accused of her husband's murder.

She also faces two charges of maliciously administering prescription drugs as a poison to Mr Whalley, a landscape gardener, on October 25 and November 6, 1994, and one of bigamously marrying him in Gibraltar on April 7, 1994, while married to John Lowey, her second husband and the father of her two children.

Their "stormy" relationship began five years ago, three years after Mr Whalley's wife died of cancer. Mr Whalley was found dead in the mobile home the couple shared on January 9 this year. Paul Becker, for the prosecution, said that there was enough temazepam in Mr Whalley's blood to make him drowsy and enough morphine to kill him. Both drugs had been prescribed to Mrs Lowey, who was treated for cancer of the cervix in 1992. The cancer has since spread to her lungs.

Mr Becker said: "She frequently said she wished Mr Whalley dead and would kill him if she could get away with it. She would not leave him because she didn't want to lose her right to the money."

The case was adjourned for a week.

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Pets tuck in as store wars turn into a dog's dinner

By Carol Midgley

DESIGNER pet foods for the "less active" cat and the "more mature" dog were launched by Sainsbury's yesterday, in defiance of American-based specialist manufacturers who have refused to supply the main supermarket chains.

Britain's growing demand for gourmet and specialist pet foods has become such an important area of the market that Tesco is considering complaining to the Office of Fair Trading to allege restrictive practices by manufacturers who prefer to supply small

outlets such as veterinary surgeries. John Gildersleeve, a Tesco director, said: "We can only assume they want to maintain unnecessarily high prices."

John Ramsden, a director for Sainsbury's, said: "There is only one subject more emotive than pet food and that is baby food."

The conflict is the latest turn in the nation's seemingly limitless budget for dining pets. Owners spend about £1.3 billion each year on pet food. Luxury and specialist varieties account for about £750 million. Apart from "super-premium" and "vitamin enriched"

meats available at most supermarkets, discerning cats and dogs can have salmon and chive (with jelly), liver sausage, tuna mousse, canned pâtés and sugar-free yoghurt drops. There are balanced diets for pregnant bitches, cheese-flavoured crunchies as snacks between meals, and vegetarian food for dogs.

Sainsbury's new Select Diet range of 11 products claims to be scientifically formulated to cater for animals at different stages of their lives, with a growth formula for puppies, older dog formula with "moderately decreased calo-

ries to avoid obesity", and a high-energy food for working dogs. Mr Ramsden said: "Our customers clearly wanted this kind of product; there was a problem with supply, so instead of bleating about it we have come up with our own."

Among the independent companies refusing to supply supermarkets are Hill's pet food products, Eukanuba (Leanders) and Iams. A spokeswoman for Hill's said yesterday: "We have no comment at all."

Pet food has come a long way since the turn of the century, when James Spratt arrived in London,

spotted puppies eating ship's biscuits on the quayside and invented dog biscuits. Four years ago, the world's first fast-food restaurant for dogs opened in Toledo, Ohio.

Prices for some pet foods can reach human proportions. A tin of vegetarian dog food is 42p, against 25p for a tin of baked beans. Cat's milk with extra vitamins and reduced lactose is 45p for 250mls, against about 35p for a pint drunk by humans. Sugar-free chocolate drops and yoghurt drops for dogs are £1.37 for 250g, against £1.50 for the same weight of chocolate buttons for humans. John

Shankey, spokesman for Pets at Home, a Cheshire-based wholesaler and distributor which operates 16 pet superstores in Britain, said: "People see their pets as part of the family but something as a poor relation because they cannot speak for themselves."

"By giving them luxury foods or a healthy diet that they might eat themselves, they feel they are including them in the family unit. In supermarkets people spend more time choosing pet food than any other product."

Leading article, page 19

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rapist was trapped by discarded shopping

A man who raped a teenage girl at a recreation ground was caught when he left a cucumber bearing a sticker at the scene. Police traced the shop from which it was bought and seized a video film showing the rapist at the shop a short time before the assault.

At Winchester Crown Court yesterday Ricki Webster, 22, formerly of Calmore, Hampshire, admitted raping the 17-year-old last October. The case was adjourned for reports.

Body sent home

The body of Johannes Masheder, 23, from Wincle, Cheshire, found at a Thailand temple last month, has been flown home after an autopsy determined that she died from a blow to the head. A Buddhist monk has been arrested.

Absent winners

Lottery prizes worth £20 million are waiting to be claimed, including £94,000 for a ticket bought in Oldham last August whose owner has just two weeks left to act. After 180 days, the money plus interest goes to good causes.

IVF discovery

Scientists at University College London have identified the protein in sperm that triggers the transformation of a fertilised egg into an embryo. They believe the discovery may improve the rate of in-vitro fertilisation.

Killer on run

A murderer is on the run after being allowed to leave an open prison for an unescorted shopping trip. Alan Hirst, 40, who killed a clergyman, was 15 years into a life sentence at Sudbury, Derbyshire. He may have headed for London.

Appeal total

The Times Christmas Appeal raised £100,535 for the Royal Marsden Hospital children's cancer unit. A hospital spokesman said: "We are immensely grateful to all the Times readers who have contributed so generously."

CORRECTIONS

□ Mr Ibrahim Hewitt is the development officer of the Association of Muslim Schools of the United Kingdom and Eire (report, January 22).

□ KPMG, the accountancy firm (article, January 17), was founded in 1857; Sir William Barclay Bart joined the partnership in 1870.

□ Today is the 200th anniversary of Robert Burns's death, not his birth as stated in an article yesterday.

Wrinkles caused by minutes in the sun

By Nigel Hawkes
SCIENCE EDITOR

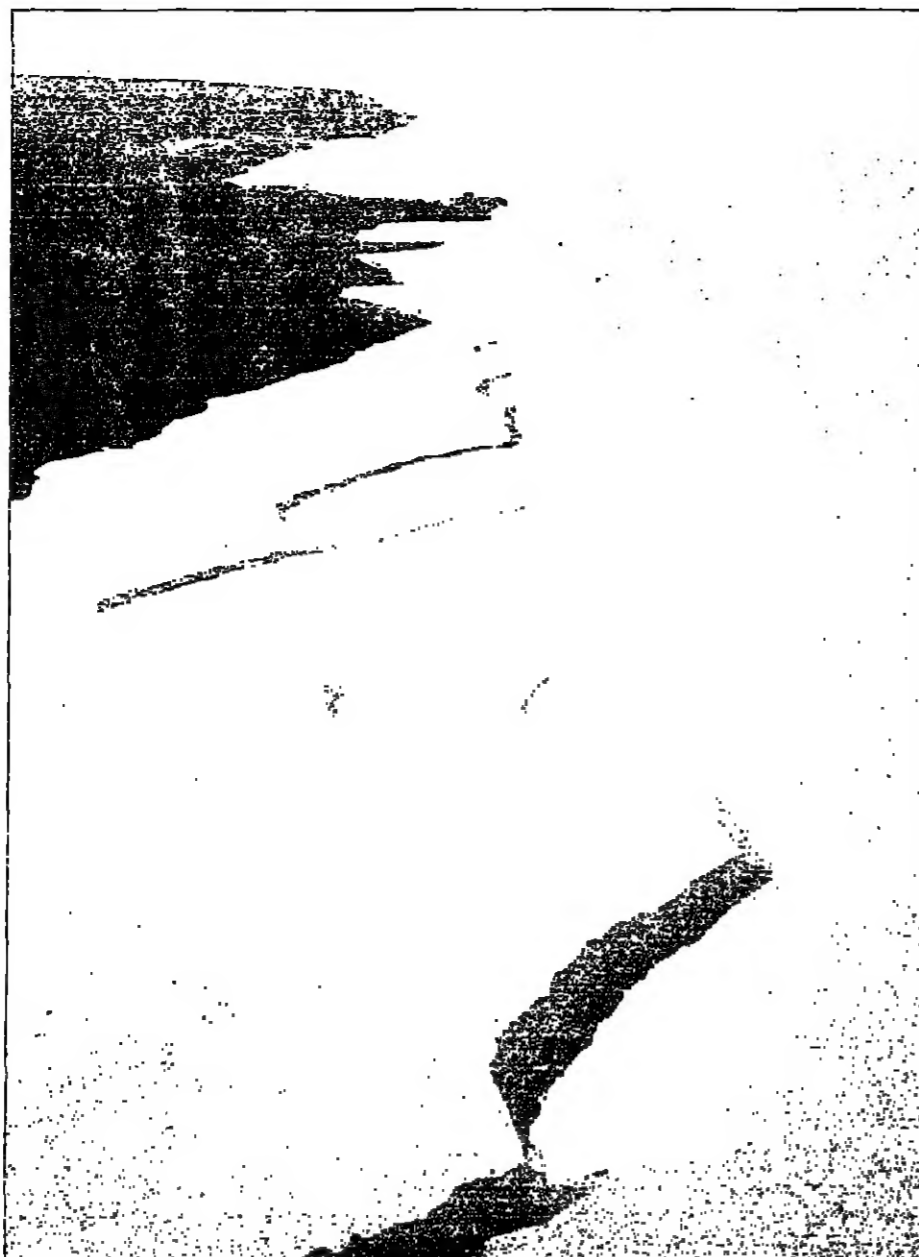
JUST two minutes in the sun is enough to start the production of wrinkle-producing chemicals in the skin, American scientists report today.

Long before the skin has even reddened, enzymes called metalloproteinases are produced and begin degrading the components of the skin that keep it looking plump and youthful.

The discovery could open up ways of preventing sun damage to the skin, by blocking the activity of the enzymes, the scientists report in *Nature*. Dr Gary Fisher and colleagues at the University of Michigan Medical School exposed light-skinned volunteers to ultraviolet light from a sunlamp. To guarantee the skin they used was as undamaged as possible, they used the buttocks.

Within minutes of sun exposure, they found, chemicals known as transcription factors, which stimulate metalloproteinase genes, flew into action. Huge amounts were produced in the first day or so.

The scientists say that retinoic acid, a derivative of vitamin A used to treat skin conditions from acne to wrinkles, prevents the production of metalloproteinases when rubbed on the skin.



Scores of ice shelves are at risk of disintegrating if temperatures continue to increase

Temperature rise melts away huge Antarctic ice sheets

By Nick Nuttall
ENVIRONMENT
CORRESPONDENT

ICE sheets in Antarctica are disappearing at an alarming rate as rising temperatures appear to confirm fears of global warming.

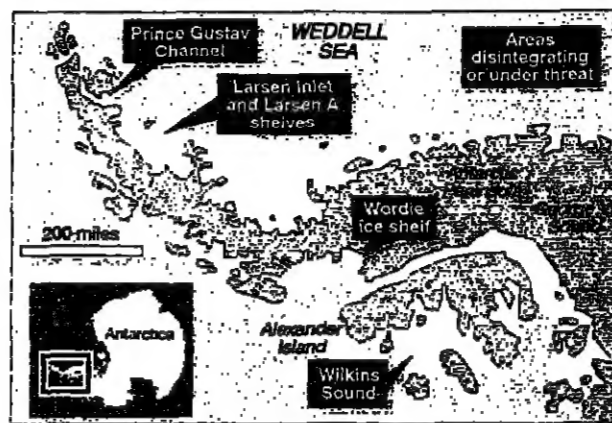
Researchers at the British Antarctic Survey studying the continent's peninsula found after analysing maps and satellite images that five out of nine sheets have disintegrated in the past five decades. In total about 8,500 square kilometres have vanished, an area the size of Norfolk.

At the same time temperatures have risen by 2.5C, broadly in line with super-computer forecasts of global warming in the region, caused by man's pollution. The scientists claim scores of other ice shelves will be at risk if temperatures continue to rise.

David Vaughan, a glaciologist at the survey, said yesterday that the retreat of the ice shelves might be part of a natural cycle. But he added: "It might also be a first-class indicator of global warming... something significant is clearly happening here."

A spokesman said only a few scientists were working on the area and that parts of ice shelves had in some cases disappeared almost overnight, making it hard to notice at the time. The findings, published today in *Nature*, are based on studies of ice shelves on the peninsula, which stretches southwest from the main land mass. Last February researchers at the survey announced in *The Times* that a giant iceberg had broken free from a disintegrating part of the Larsen ice shelf.

The findings show the retreat of the ice is far more widespread and heading to-



wards some of the continent's bigger shelves such as the Ross and Ronne. Since the 1950s, the Prince Gustav channel ice shelf has disappeared, as have the Larsen inlet and Larsen A on the eastern side. The scientists believe the Larsen B shelf is now threatened.

On the western side the Wordie ice shelf has disintegrated and the Muller ice shelf is disintegrating. The Wilkins ice shelf in Alexander Island just off the peninsula is now also threatened.

The studies suggest there is an average annual temperature of -5C above which ice shelves, projections of sea ice fed by glaciers on the land, cannot survive. A further 1C rise is likely to trigger more disintegration of the Larsen ice shelf and could begin affecting the George VI shelf further south.

Mr Vaughan said they believed they were close to understanding why ice shelves suddenly collapse as temperatures rise.

The team believe the melted water percolates through weak spots in the ice, transferring heat deep into the frozen shelf. Here it causes cracks

and fissures that accelerate the process. Melting water on the surface might also decrease the reflectivity of the ice, allowing more heat to be absorbed.

A further disintegration of the ice sheets could lead to more icebergs in the southern seas, increasing threats to shipping.

But penguins, seals and other wildlife could benefit. They tend to thrive on rocky areas more of which would be exposed.

Some scientists have predicted that as Antarctica melts sea levels will rise. But Mr Vaughan said that for a significant impact on sea levels, the Ross and Ronne shelves further south would have to go. They are fed by huge ice sheets which, running off the land, would increase the volumes of the world's seas.

But this would require a further rise of 10C which, at current rates or warming, would take 200 years.

Mr Vaughan said by that time the world would be in such turmoil that sea levels would be far less important than the ability of man to feed himself.

Driving test chief to forgo his bonus

By Jonathan Prynn
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

THE head of the Driving Standards Agency will not be paid his £4,000 performance bonus this year because of a sharp rise in waiting times for driving tests.

In a written Commons answer Steve Norris, the Transport Minister, said that the salary paid to Bernard Herdan, appointed chief executive of the agency last year, would be reduced because of the "non-achievement" of service targets.

The agency has been struggling with a massive surge in applications triggered by the announcement of a compulsory written driving test from July. It was also in the middle of a reorganisation. The average national waiting time for tests has risen to more than 7½ weeks, with waiting lists of longer than ten weeks at 15 test centres.

Learner drivers have also complained about tests being cancelled at short notice because of a shortage of examiners: last application forms and a telephone booking service that is almost permanently engaged. The agency lost its Chartermark in November as a result of the failings.

Mr Herdan, 48, is paid a basic salary of £59,044 and is entitled to a bonus of up to 15 per cent, of which about half, £4,000, is linked to meeting service performance targets.

Sixty extra staff were being taken on to answer telephone applications and part-time examiners were being trained, Mr Herdan said.



Kelvin: spikes fell out

MP tackles a prickly problem

By Paul Wilkinson

KELVIN the hedgehog is feeling the cold more than most. He is partly bald. Animal welfare workers have given him a woolly coat until the rest of his spines grow back.

Kelvin was a victim of the kind of attack that a Private Member's Bill to be discussed tomorrow in Parliament seeks to outlaw. Youths in a school playground sprayed him with red paint and the toxins caused his spikes to fall out.

Alan Meale, the Labour MP for Mansfield, will introduce his Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill, which would make it an offence to "mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate" any wild creature. But unless the Bill attracts government support it is unlikely to progress far.

The Hedgehog Hospital at Hull is treating Kelvin with the ointment propolis, made by bees, to stop his skin going dry, and feeding him with vitamins.

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هكذا من الأصل

English Heritage accuses Roman Catholic diocese of deliberately neglecting listed church

Victorian cathedral 'left to vandals and thieves'

By RUSSELL JENKINS

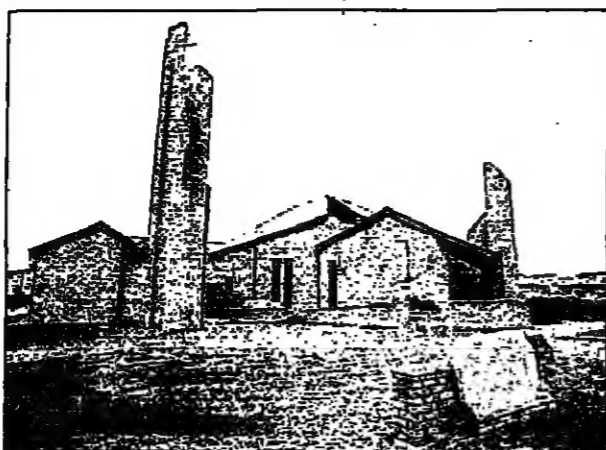
THE Roman Catholic Church was accused by English Heritage yesterday of deliberately letting a former cathedral fall into ruin.

St Mary's Old Cathedral, Middlesbrough, was once a magnificent example of Victorian ecclesiastical architecture and the spiritual centre of a busy town-centre community. The red-brick, Grade II* listed building now has a rotting roof that lets in rain, the stained glass windows are smashed and boarded up, statues removed or stolen and the canopied pulpit, furniture and fittings wrecked beyond repair.

Hundreds of pigeons roost in the hammerbeam rafters while the marble and wooden marquetry floor, now stripped, has been home to drug addicts. Vandals have followed in the wake of thieves and dragged the building "to the point of no return".

English Heritage attacked the Middlesbrough diocese for its management of a church in the top 7 per cent of listed buildings for artistic and historical importance. The preservation group has grown impatient waiting for the church authorities to apply for a grant for structural repairs.

"We believe the current state of the cathedral is due to



The new cathedral, built in 1986, which residents say triggered the decline of the old building

deliberate neglect by the diocese," a spokesman said. "We are actually encouraging them to apply for grant aid so we can give every help we can to preserve this as a place of worship."

"We are waiting on the Church. Unless they apply to us we cannot make a response. We want it to be properly maintained and looked after, so we want them to come forward."

The Right Rev Monsignor Raymond Charlton, the diocesan financial secretary, denied the allegation. He said yesterday that negotiations with a developer have raised hope that the building can be saved

from demolition. The plight of the building in a district blighted by the decline of the iron ore industry has given residents the impression that they have been abandoned by the Church. The congregation of about 50 worshippers in a community centre.

Layers of pigeon droppings had to be scraped from the pews in June when the last service was held. It was a first Communion for children from St Christopher's primary school. Eileen Moran, the head, said: "The church is totally vandalised and the precious things, the mosaics, the leaded windows and church furniture, have been

damaged, vandalised or removed.

"It was once the centre of the community and now its doors are locked and the broken windows boarded up. We would love to see part of it for the use of the community and reopened as a living church again."

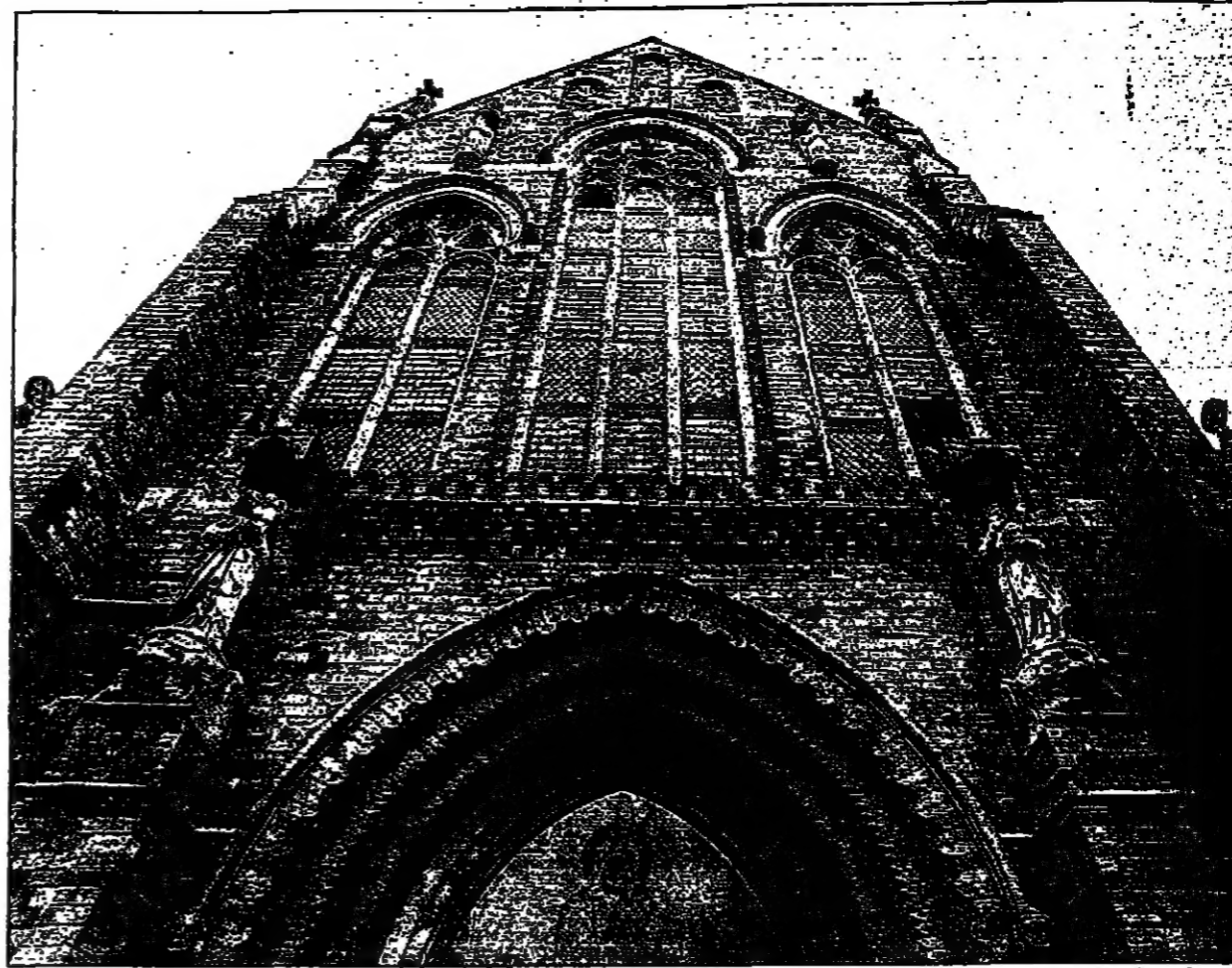
St Mary's was designed by George Goldie and completed in 1878. Pevsner's *The Kings of England* praises the building, pulpit and Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament.

The church's decline was triggered when Middlesbrough's new cathedral, also dedicated to St Mary, was built at Coulby Newham in 1986. Residents say the degradation has been accelerating since the resident priest, Father Peter Keeling, left almost two years ago.

Ian Stubbs, chairman of St Hilda's Partnership, a local regeneration agency, has been dismayed by the vandalism and theft.

Precious mosaics, decorated panels, candlesticks and vases have disappeared. A presidential chair and wooden angels were stolen the night before Mr Stubbs led a team into the church to save anything of value.

Property has been recovered from Darlington and one valuable brass tabernacle was discovered in The Nether-



The disused red-brick church, once praised as a magnificent example of 19th-century ecclesiastical architecture

lands. "We are down in the dumps," he said. "Nobody is telling anybody who lives and works in the community what is going on."

Earlier this month Dr Rory O'Donnell, an English Heritage inspector, wrote to the diocese describing the building as a disgrace and urging

the Church to use it for worship again.

The diocese has been trying to sell the property for five years and one project to develop it for offices fell through only recently.

Monsignor Charlton hopes that talks with new developers to turn the building into a combined ac-

commodation, training and education centre for young people may succeed. A chapel for the community would be included.

He said: "To infer that there was a deliberate policy, on behalf of the trustees, to allow the building to fall into disrepair in order to achieve a

demolition order is manifestly false.

"It is alleged that we have not done enough and that is particularly hurtful. We have been trying to find an alternative use for a listed building and that is particularly difficult, particularly for a large Victorian church."

Michelin honours Irish restaurant

By ROBIN YOUNG

FOR the first time a restaurant meal in Ireland is "worth a detour", according to the 1996 edition of the Michelin Guide, published today. The book promotes two restaurants to its two-star rating, Fied & Terre in Bloomsbury, central London, and Patrick Guilbaud in Dublin. The latter wins the first two-star rating in Ireland.

The promotion of Fied & Terre, a 12-table restaurant specialising in "in-gourmand food at prices from £22 for a three-course lunch to £48 for a four-course dinner, puts Richard Neat on the same rating as his mentor, Raymond Blanc, at Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons, near Oxford, one of only six other establishments to have two stars. There are four restaurants with three stars; they are unchanged from last year.

Seventeen additional one-star awards increase the total to 68, while the number of restaurants with Red Ms, which indicate consistent care

and attention to meals, rises by 25 to a total of 93. Derek Brown, the guide's editor, said yesterday: "On average, standards throughout the hotel and restaurant industry are improving year on year."

The guide now includes recommendations for 4,886 hotels and 1,083 restaurants. "New" one-star awards: Greenhouse, Interlude de Chaville, L'Escargot, central London; Northcote Manor, Blackburn; Hamstead House, Bristol; Fleur de Sel, Haslemere, Surrey; Box Tree, Ilkley, West Yorkshire; Pool Court at 42, Leeds; Merchant House, Ludlow, Shropshire; Lovells at Windrush Farm, Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire; Sharrow Bay Country House, Ullswater, Cumbria; Llanggoed Hall, Llyswen, Powys; One Devonshire Gardens, Glasgow; Shanks, Bangor, Co Down; Broome's, St Aubin, Jersey; Shiro, Abakistia, Co Cork; Thornton's, Dublin.

□ Michelin Red Guide to Great Britain and Ireland (£12.99)

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THE TIMES

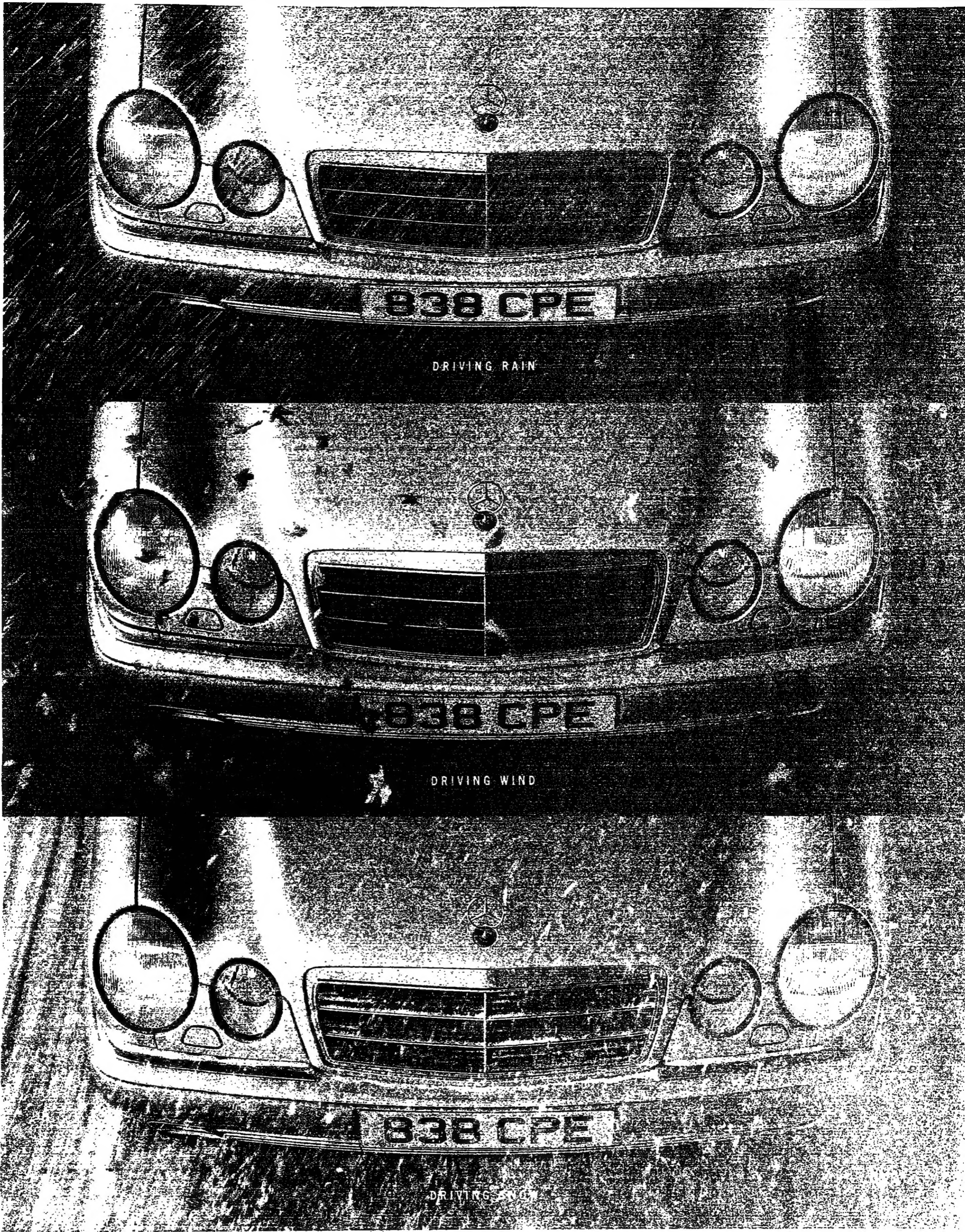
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Commission convinced that paramilitaries will never surrender weapons before talks begin

Compromise is the only way ahead, says Mitchell

By NICHOLAS WOOD, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

DESTRUCTION of terrorist weapons should take place during all-party talks on the future of Northern Ireland, the report of the international body set up by the British and Irish governments says.

The report, from the three-man team chaired by George Mitchell, the former US senator, says its proposal is a compromise intended to break the impasse in the quest for a lasting peace in the Province.

The report, which calls on all parties to affirm their commitment to six "fundamental principles of democracy and non-violence", says the deadlock over decommissioning has obscured the widespread agreement that already exists in Northern Ireland. "Members of both traditions may be less far apart on the resolution of their differences than they believe. No one should underestimate the value of a consensus for peace, and the fact that no significant group is actively seeking to end it."

The dispute over decommissioning is a "symptom of a larger problem: the absence of trust. But a resolution of the decommissioning issue... will not be found if the parties resort to their vast inventories of historical recrimination.

Or, as it was put to us several times, what is really needed is a decommissioning of minds in Northern Ireland."

The report makes detailed recommendations on the arrangements for decommissioning illegally held weapons and suggests further "confidence-building" measures.

Decommissioning
On the key issue of decommissioning paramilitary arsenals, the report says: "We have concluded that there is a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such arms to work constructively to achieve full and verifiable decommissioning as part of

the process of all-party negotiations. But that commitment does not include decommissioning prior to such negotiations.

"We have concluded that the paramilitary organisations will not decommission any arms prior to all-party negotiations. That was the unanimous and emphatically expressed view of the representatives of the political parties close to paramilitary organisations on both sides. It was also the view of the vast majority of the organisations and individuals who made oral and written submissions. It was not that they are all opposed to prior decommissioning. To the contrary, many favour it. But they are convinced it will not happen. That is the reality with which all concerned must deal."

In a reference to the position of the British Government, it says: "We were told that the clearest demonstration of adherence to democratic principles is the safe removal and disposal of paramilitary arms, and that at this time only a start to decommissioning will provide the confidence necessary for all-party negotiations to commence."

But this was not acceptable to Sinn Féin, the SDLP, the Irish Government and the loyalist paramilitaries. "We were told that decommissioning prior to all-party negotiations was not requested before the announcement of the ceasefires, and that had it been, there would have been no ceasefires; that those who entered into the ceasefires did so in the belief that they would lead immediately to all-party negotiations."

The report says that each side of the argument reflects a "core of reasonable concern" that should be appreciated by the other. "Those who insist on prior decommissioning need to be reassured that the commitment to peaceful and democratic means by those formerly supportive of politically motivated violence is genuine and irreversible, and that the threat or use of such violence will not be invoked to influence the process of negotiations or to change any agreed settlement. Those who have

been persuaded to abandon violence for the peaceful political path need to be reassured that a meaningful and inclusive process of negotiation is genuinely being offered to address the legitimate concerns of their traditions and the need for new political

arrangements with which all can identify."

The parties should consider an approach "under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of all-party negotiations, rather than before or after as the parties now urge. Such an approach represents a compromise. If the peace process is to move forward, the current impasse must be overcome."

The report says that adherence to six principles would create the climate in which all-party talks could proceed. "These commitments, when made and honoured, would remove the threat of force before, during and after all-party negotiations. They would focus all concerned on what is ultimately essential if the gun is to be taken out of Irish politics: an agreed political settlement and the total and verifiable disarmament of all paramilitary organisations."

Weapons disposal
The commission advises on the practicalities of destroying weapons. The report's first point is that the decommissioning process "should suggest neither victory nor defeat". It says that the IRA and loyalist ceasefires are "products not of surrender but rather of a willingness to address differences through political means". Decommissioning should take place to the satisfaction of an independent commission, which would be appointed by the British and Irish governments after consultations with all parties. The commission would operate independently in both countries and would enjoy "appropriate legal status and immunity". The report says that such a commission should be able to draw on independent sources of legal and technical advice and adequate resources to receive and audit armaments and to observe and verify the decommissioning process. It would also be able to call upon the assistance of the British and Irish armies.

Decommissioning should result in "the complete destruction of armaments in a manner that contributes to public safety". Techniques would include cutting up or chipping of small arms and other weapons and the controlled explosion of ammunition and explosives.

Four methods are suggested for the removal of weapons: arms could be handed to the commission or designated representatives of either government for destruction; information on the whereabouts of weapons could be passed to the commission or government representatives; arms could be deposited in an agreed location for collection by the commission or government representatives; parties should also have the option of destroying their own weapons. The report says that the decommissioning process should be "fully verifiable" by the appointed commission.

Amnesties
Decommissioning should not

expose individuals to prosecution. The report says: "Individuals involved in the decommissioning process should not be prosecuted for the possession of those armaments; amnesties should be established in law in both jurisdictions."

"Armaments made available for decommissioning, whether directly or indirectly, should be exempt under law from forensic examination, and information obtained as a result of the decommissioning process should be inadmissible as evidence in courts of law in either jurisdiction."

Confidence building
The report says decommissioning should take place "on the basis of the mutual commitment and participation of the paramilitary organisations", and goes beyond its strict remit to offer comments on further confidence-building measures.

It says that the "early termination of paramilitary activities, including surveillance and targeting, would demonstrate a commitment to peaceful methods and so build trust among other parties and alleviate the fears and anxieties of the general population". Information on the fate of missing persons and the return of those forced to leave their communities would also help. Further moves by the Government to release terrorist prisoners would bolster trust, as would early implementation of the proposed review of the emergency legislation for Northern Ireland. The report rejects Sinn Féin's suggestion for decommissioning to be extended to weapons held by British troops in Ulster. "There is no equivalence between such weapons and those held by the security forces. However, in the context of building mutual confidence, we welcome the commitment of the governments... to continue to take responsive measures, advised by their security authorities, as the threat reduces."

The report goes on to "share the hope... that policing in Northern Ireland can be normalised as soon as the security situation permits. A review of the situation with respect to legally registered weapons and the use of plastic bullets, and continued progress toward more balanced representation in the police force would contribute to the building of trust."

In a reference to the Ulster Unionist call for an elected assembly as a forum for all-party talks, the report says: "Several oral and written submissions raised the idea of an elected body. We note the reference in the Communiqué [issued by the two governments in November 1995] to how an elected body could play a part. Elections held in accordance with democratic principles express and reflect the popular will. If it were broadly acceptable, with an appropriate mandate, and within the three-strand structure, an elective process could contribute to the building of confidence."

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General John de Chastelain, left, George Mitchell and Harri Holkeri at the launch of their report yesterday in Belfast

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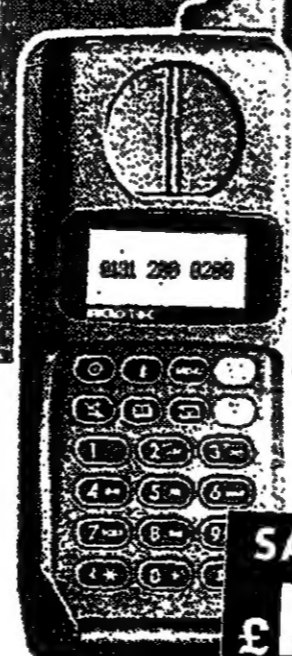
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Reports by DOMINIC KENNEDY

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MPs in search of a show trial are disappointed as leader's plea for party unity succeeds

Harman's ordeal falls short of lurid expectations

By Jill Sherman, Political Correspondent

IT WAS billed as the execution of Harriet Harman. But the highly charged meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party never quite turned into the show trial expected yesterday.

A passionate speech from Tony Blair calling for party unity proved enough to turn the tables, demonstrating yet again his hold over the party.

At 11.20am the first MPs started drifting into Room 14 on Westminster's committee corridor, grim-faced and baying for Ms Harman's blood. There was talk of MPs demanding a vote to seal her fate. One said: "If she doesn't resign, I will."

At 11.28 a tense Ms Harman turned up, flanked by Henry McLeish and Alan Milburn, members of her health team. She had spent part of the morning visiting her daughter's school, where the child was playing the cello in her first public performance.

At 11.30 Tony Blair walked in, smiling nervously. Most of the Shadow Cabinet had already taken their places.

Officials had said that MPs were evenly divided into those for and against Ms Harman and it was clear from the start that the meeting would be antagonistic, with three MPs, Paul Flynn, Alice Mahon and Clive Soley, calling for her to resign.

Many of the ten backbenchers who spoke deliberately did not mention her name but agreed that the party should unite over the issue. Michael Martin, MP for Glasgow Springburn, insisted that there was no justification for Ms Harman's decision to send her child to a grammar school. He had been faced with the same choice and had sent his children to his local comprehensive. If he wasn't allowed to send his child to the best school, why was she, he demanded.

Clive Soley, MP for Harmer-Smith, called for her resignation, arguing that she had to accept collective Shadow

Cabinet responsibility. He said that the Tories and the press would continue to exploit the dispute unless she stepped down.

Mr Soley went on to defend his own education at an inner-city school where violence and bullying were the norm. "I came away with the ability to cope with life in a way that people in protected schools do not."

Roy Hattersley, the former deputy Labour leader, also criticised Ms Harman but did not openly call for her to resign. He urged the party to campaign on its commitment to comprehensive education saying it was vital to kill any idea that the party was revising its policy.

Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, alienated many of

Ms Harman's critics when he turned on Mr Blair, criticising him for sending his son to the grant-maintained London Oratory. He attacked the "golden circle" around the leader and accused him of going against the principles of the party.

His attack made several MPs wince with embarrassment and helped to change the mood of the meeting. They were out to get Ms Harman, not Mr Blair.

Other speakers capitalised on Mr Flynn's error of judgment. Gerald Kaufman called on the party to unite against the Tories and George Howarth said that other MPs would face similar difficult decisions. But the most surprising person to support Ms Harman was Bernie Grant, the MP for Tottenham. He rallied against the standards of schools in his constituency and across London, regretting having sent his children to local schools.

"I understand that people want the best for their children," he said. "London schools are a disgrace. They were bad under Labour but now they are rotten."

In an emotional five-minute speech, Ms Harman apologised for the trouble she had caused the party. "I deeply regret that any decision I have taken has given any succour to the Tories and any opportunity for them to attack the Labour Party," she said.

MPs gave her a sympathetic round of applause but many were not convinced by her apologies. "It was pitiful," said one.

It was left to Mr Blair to rescue her. In an emotional speech he called for the party to "pull together". It was enough. The MPs left the meeting singing his praises. They had almost forgotten Ms Harman. "She could have been Fred West's accomplice and we would still have supported him," one MP said.

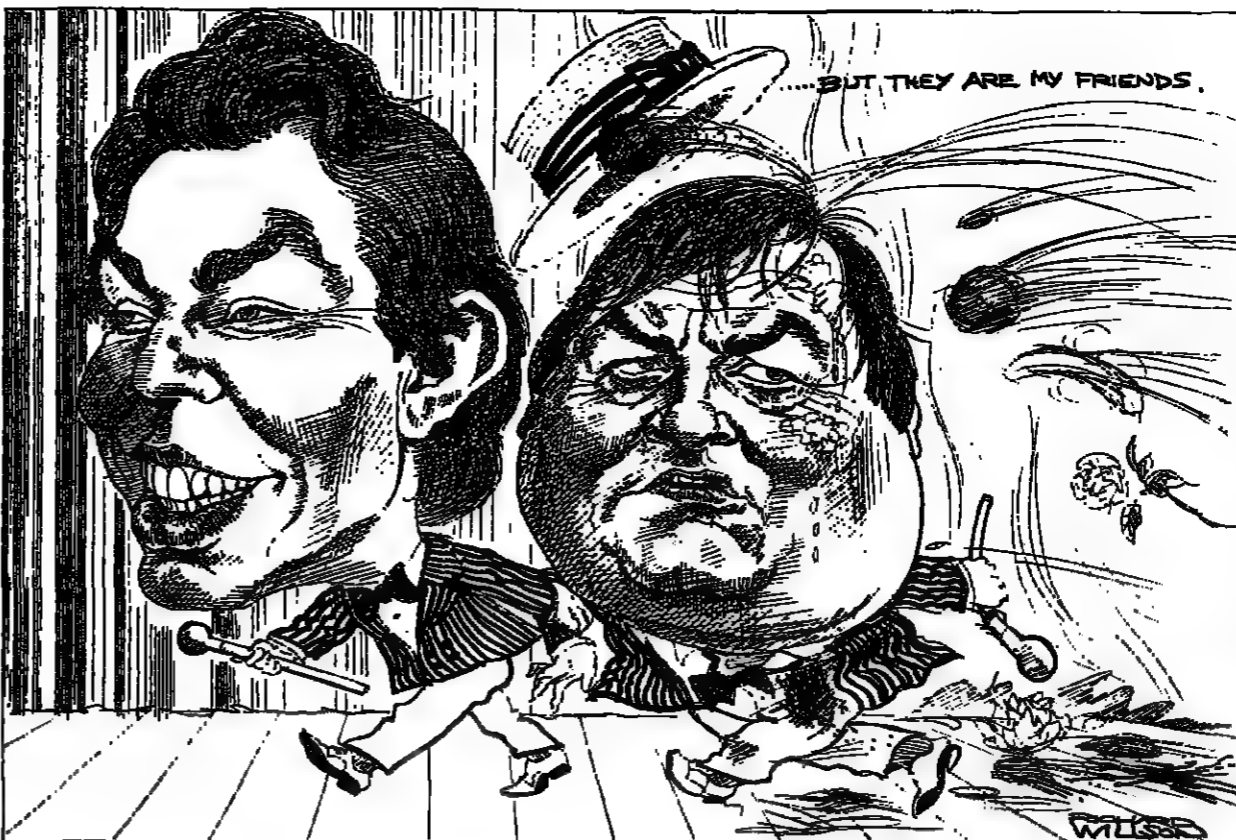
Leading article, page 19



Soley: called for Harman's resignation



Grant: surprising show of support



Double act with Prescott that Blair can ill afford to harm

By Philip Webster, Political Editor

Gordon Brown and Robin Cook may be the brains in the Labour leadership, but John Prescott is much more than his brawn. Without him Tony Blair would be able to achieve little, and no one knows it better than the Labour leader.

As the Harriet Harman crisis began to subside yesterday, yet again the deputy leader's value to Mr Blair was underlined. It is an open secret at Westminster that the occasionally fiery Mr Prescott is deeply unhappy at the events of the past few days.

First of all he was not told in advance the news, known only to a handful of leadership friends, that Harriet Harman was to send her son to a grammar school. Then — through error rather than a conspiracy — he was not told of the plan to leak it to selected newspapers last Friday to preempt what would have been more damaging coverage in the weekend press, leaving

him flat-footed when giving radio interviews on other matters on Saturday morning. When he did learn about it he was appalled at what Ms Harman had done. He did not semi-publicly call her a "wining hypocrite", as some reports have claimed, but he was less than complimentary about his colleague.

It was not the first time that Mr Prescott had been left "out of the loop". He was not a recipient of the notorious Philip Gould memo — suggesting that Labour was not yet fit for government — which was leaked during last year's TUC conference: nor was he at the New Forest gathering of Blair friends and media experts last year, leading to claims that he had been excluded.

It would be no surprise to learn that Mr Prescott, along with an overwhelming majority of the parliamentary party, would prefer Ms Harman to resign. Had he rebelled against Mr Blair's decision to

stand by her he would have had much of the party behind him. But Mr Prescott knew that was precisely the outcome desired by the Government. A split between the Labour leader and his deputy is the golden scenario over which most Tories drool. Mr Prescott's stony expression in the Commons on Tuesday raised his hopes that he was close to breaking point.

He swiftly realised, however, that the survival of otherwise of Ms Harman had become the battle that Mr Blair could not afford to lose. It had been elevated into the crucial test of new Labour; if Ms Harman chose to go for exercising her choice as a parent, old Labour would triumph and Mr Blair would be severely, perhaps fatally, wounded.

So Mr Prescott, being the party trooper that he is, swallowed his deep reservations and went along with his

leader. The two had a lengthy chat on Tuesday after Question Time before Mr Blair's strategy of backing Ms Harman took shape. Thereafter he was on board and the crisis began to ease. Mr Prescott was by Mr Blair's side as he told his MPs that he would not yield Ms Harman's scalp. In his own contribution later he could not bring himself to mention Ms Harman but his message was clear: "Let's put it behind us."

The MP Gerald Kaufman has observed the relationship grow. "John has a genuine loyalty to Tony — it is striking," he said.

Mr Prescott has admitted privately that in spite of his initial misgivings Mr Blair was right to abandon the Clause Four commitment to nationalisation. Mr Blair would not have accomplished that change without him. The leadership will be wary of straining Mr Prescott's loyalty again.

Tories try to keep up the pressure

By James Landale, Political Reporter

HARRIET HARMAN took her fight for political survival to the Commons yesterday, hitting back at Tory MPs in a debate on the health service.

Undaunted by persistent heckling from the Tory benches, the Shadow Health Secretary attacked the Government for its creeping privatisation of the NHS. She said ministers had ignored what she called the "crisis" in healthcare provision that was forcing hospitals to turn away the sick.

She responded to Tory MPs' interventions about the grammar school row by telling them that they should be more interested in the NHS than in "making cheap points". She condemned the increase in the number of managers and bureaucrats in the NHS combined with cuts in the number of nurses. "The NHS is becoming less and less public service and more and more a private business run on the basis of cost, not of need," she said.

Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, praised Ms Harman for supporting diversity and choice in education. "The reason Ms Harman is right and virtually all her colleagues on her own back benches are wrong is that she has shown by her actions that she endorses the principles and values of a free and open society," he said.

"That is important in the world of education and equally important in the world of healthcare."

IN PARLIAMENT

YESTERDAY in the Commons: backbench debates; education and employment questions; Labour-initiated debate on the National Health Service. In the Lords: opportunities in the proposed free trade area of the Americas; motor sport industry; Companies Act (Miscellaneous Accounting Amendments) Regulations; Financial Services Act (Investment Services) (Exemption of Scope of Act) Order. TODAY in the Commons: questions to Northern Ireland ministers and the Prime Minister; Finance Bill, committee stage; the Health Service Commissioners (Amendment) Bill, committee stage; the Law of the Sea (Amendment and Privileges) Order; International Sea-Bed Authority (Immunities and Privileges) Order; Merchant Shipping (Convention of Pollution) (Law of the Sea Convention) Order.

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Santer tells euro doubters 'the clock cannot be stopped'

FROM CHARLES BRENNER IN BRUSSELS

JACQUES SANTER, the President of the European Commission, tried yesterday to silence the growing chorus of doubt over European monetary union but had to compete with new questions over the project from senior French and Spanish politicians.

"It is irresponsible to sow doubts" on its fate, said M. Santer at the close of a three-day conference called by the Commission to launch a publicity campaign for the birth, 36 months away, of the euro.

M. Santer took issue with Carlos Westendorp, the Spanish Foreign Minister and a leading figure in European affairs, for a suggestion it might be preferable to "stop the clock" and delay the 1999 deadline set in the Maastricht treaty until Britain, Spain and Italy could join the single currency. "Stopping the clocks will not prevent the 21st century arriving," said M. Santer.

His reference to a "credibility crisis", made in the

monumental new European Parliament building in Brussels, merely echoed comments heard around the Continent. But his words stung because he has played a central role in the Union in recent months as chairman of the Reflection Group that prepared the ground for the forthcoming Maastricht treaty review.

M. Santer and his team were also taken aback yesterday by a suggestion from Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former French President and fervent pro-European, that the treaty's terms could be bent to allow the euro a painless birth on time. M. Giscard said the Maastricht criteria on economic convergence should be massaged to take account of the slowdown threatening the EMU calendar.

M. Santer welcomed all ideas but said that nothing should get in the way of the Maastricht text.

M. Giscard d'Estaing's proposal drew on the fact that the

treaty lets countries into EMU without full compliance in special circumstances. However, that flexibility has, in effect, been eliminated by recent fierce pressure from Germany for strict adherence to the criteria.

The wave of monetary angst across the Continent has embarrassed M. Santer and his team. While privately acknowledging the uncertainties, they argue that doubters only play into the hands of "anti-Europeans" in Britain, France and elsewhere. M. Santer said there was no point "going on the defensive and leaving the ground to critics spreading counter-projects".

Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the Commissioner for the EMU project, agreed, saying: "We are not working on alternative scenarios. We are applying the letter of the treaty."

The project's scale became even more apparent at M. Santer's £750,000 gathering. Some 400 experts and Euro-ministries agreed the single currency had little chance if people could not be swiftly convinced of its merits.

The first "lie" they wanted to purge is the belief, taking hold especially in France, that EMU spells unemployment. A narrow majority of EU citizens now believes that, according to a Commission poll. A key task will be convincing the German population, of which only 38 per cent is in favour of swapping the mark for the euro — only two percentage points ahead of the British.

Expert opinion was mixed, however, on whether the "explanatory campaign" in schools, at the bank counter and through local television, should focus on "euro-in-your-pocket" benefits or the overarching political goal of European union. The model campaign, said M. Santer, was Britain's five-year effort that changed public opinion and prepared the country for decimalisation in 1971.

that has to become reality, and it's a good thing economically and politically. As far as I am concerned, it will appear on January 1, 1999, Spain ought to be, and can be, in the first group of countries that has the single currency."

He also insisted that his references on Tuesday to the possibility of "stopping the clock" if Britain, Italy or Spain could not join were hypothetical. "I don't think it's going to happen," he added. "I believe that monetary union is going to happen as long as there are enough countries, in quantity and importance. But monetary union without France and Germany and one of the other countries like Italy, Spain or the United Kingdom is impossible."

Madrid disclaimer

FROM EDWARD OWEN IN MADRID

CARLOS Westendorp, the Spanish Foreign Minister, attempted yesterday to limit the fall-out from his doubts about the European Union's ability to launch a single currency by January 1999. In the process, however, he insisted that the plan for economic and monetary union (EMU) was immersed in a "credibility crisis".

Señor Westendorp claimed that he had been quoted out of context by his Government's own news agency, Efe, when he said that "stopping the clock" might be the only way of meeting the deadline for introducing the euro.

The position of the Spanish Government in general and of myself privately is that the single currency is something



Russian miners, many of whom have not been paid for four months, hang their helmets on the ground in an anti-government protest outside the White House in Moscow yesterday. About 800 miners demonstrated in front of the building to protest

Russian miners demand pay

against the failure of Viktor Chornomyrdin, the Prime Minister, to make good a promise to pay their back wages. Miners, whose support

for Boris Yeltsin helped him to win the presidency in 1991, have turned against the leader and his Government. Many voted for Communists

and nationalists, who won the most votes in December's parliamentary elections. They plan to maintain their picket of the White House for three days. If their demands are not met, they plan to begin a nationwide strike next Thursday. (AP)

Bosnia tribunal sets date for war crimes trial

BY MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

THE first Bosnian war crimes trial has been tentatively set for March 18, when Dusko Tadic, a Bosnian Serb, will go before the international tribunal in The Hague, charged with killing prisoners in the Omarska detention camp.

The trial of the former policeman, arrested in Germany in 1994, is likely to last two months, and marks a decisive phase in the world attempt to bring to justice those individuals responsible for committing atrocities. It comes as a team of investigators, headed by Justice Richard Goldstone, is preparing to start uncovering evidence at suspected sites of mass graves in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In a clear change of policy, the investigators will now be

given support, protection and help by Nato forces in Bosnia, after initial resistance. Senior commanders believed such a role would compromise the main function of the Nato force, the enforcement of the Dayton peace accord.

Public opinion in the West has forced a swift reassessment, however. Nato forces will now be "pro-active" in

searching out and patrolling suspected grave sites.

The international tribunal refuses to say how many of its officials are in Bosnia, and where they will go. However, an investigation of the fields outside Srebrenica, where it is suspected that up to 7,000 Muslim men may be buried, will be the priority.

A difficult political question

is whether the tribunal will investigate the role played by President Milosevic of Serbia in encouraging atrocities and ethnic cleansing. Mr Justice Goldstone has held talks in Belgrade, the Serbian capital.

Fifty-two people have been indicted by the tribunal for war crimes. The main difficulty will be to ensure that they are extradited.

Security for American troops serving in Bosnia has been tightened in the wake of fears that they may be targeted by Mujahidin volunteers, many of them Islamic radicals from the Middle East who are bitterly hostile to the United States. In the wake of the sentencing of Omar Abdel-Rahman, the blind cleric who masterminded bombings and assassinations in New York, American fears of a violent Islamic retaliation have grown.

In Washington, the World Bank approved \$150 million (£99 million) in credits for Bosnia on Tuesday to help to rebuild the devastated country. The money is part of a \$500 million reconstruction package agreed last month.

Freedom brings sorrow for hostage

Sarajevo: Sadika Hajruli, 51, a frail woman held hostage by a Serb family in the basement of their house for three years, was released yesterday — only to learn that her mother had died a few days earlier. Mrs Hajruli was abducted in 1992

and held by a Serb woman to be exchanged for her own daughter, a prisoner of the Bosnian Government. Yesterday Mrs Hajruli's sister Izeta broke the news that their mother had just died. "We buried her on Friday. She was

waiting for you ... She couldn't wait any longer." Mrs Hajruli's husband, Kerim, a prisoner of the Serbs, has disappeared. The Serb woman's daughter, Radojka Pandurevic, is still being held.



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immediately realise that the Coupe is a responsive beast, not just another sheep in wolf's clothing.

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*Government Fuel Consumption figures for Civic Coupe 1.8 SR: Urban 34 mpg; Overall 50 mpg; 50 mpg; Overall 75 mpg 40 mpg. On the road price of £12,995.

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ANATOLE KALETSKY 27

The rights and wrongs of stakeholding



BOOKS 34,35

Coleridge: the restless genius of Kubla Khan



SPORT 39-44

Dallas Cowboy prepared to call the shots

HUNT FOR MISSING MILLIONS
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THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

THURSDAY JANUARY 25 1996

Shorts puts 1,500 workers on notice

By Ross TIEHAN AND ROBERT DOWELL

SHORT Brothers, the Belfast aircraft structures company, last night put 1,500 workers on three-months' notice of redundancy in case efforts to rescue Fokker, the Dutch plane-maker, fail.

The workers are involved in building wings and other structures for the regional jets assembled by Fokker, which went into administration on Tuesday after the Dutch Government and Daimler-Benz, its German parent, failed to agree on a rescue plan.

Roy McNulty, Shorts' chief executive, said Shorts and other partners and suppliers on the Fokker 70 and Fokker 100 programme had offered substantial price cuts. But they were much smaller than the 40 per cent cut Fokker had demanded just weeks ago in a desperate bid to stay in the air.

"Our immediate focus is to help Fokker to survive in any way we can," Mr McNulty said. Shorts would continue to deliver wings to the administrator, he said.

Despite hopes in The Netherlands that Bombardier, Shorts' Canadian parent, may buy Fokker's commercial aircraft business, Mr McNulty said there were no plans either at the Bombardier head office or in Belfast to mount a rescue. Although the Fokker was an excellent aircraft, the regional jet market was over-supplied, and some would have to go, he said.

Bombardier, which also owns the Havilland, Canadair and Learjet, has just launched a 50-seat regional jet of its own. Shares in Fokker lost half their value, falling to just 3.2 guilders after trading resumed on the Amsterdam stock exchange. Industry sources believe buyers may be found for Fokker's aircraft servicing and defence equipment manufacturing businesses, which are not in administration. But they insist that overcapacity in regional aircraft makes the emergence of a buyer for the regional jets and turboprop business, which employs more than 4,000, unlikely.



Slipped disc: Bill Cockburn, left, group chief executive of WH Smith, pictured with Jeremy Hardie, the chairman, made a scathing attack on the company's corporate culture after reporting a fall in profits Page 25. Tempus Page 26

Solicitor convicted over Belling fraud

By ROBERT MILLER

A FORMER solicitor and his co-conspirator were yesterday found guilty of defrauding investors in an international multimillion-pound fraud which included taking more than £3 million from the pension fund of Belling.

Charles Deacon, 54, a former under-sheriff of Stafford, and James Fuller, 57, were convicted at Middlesbrough Crown Court on eight counts of conspiracy to defraud and obtaining property by deception.

During the three-month trial, which was brought by the Serious Fraud Office after a joint investigation with Staffordshire police, the court heard how Deacon and Fuller, together with John Savage, defrauded individuals and businesses of more than £13 million.

Savage, who was under investigation in the United States in connection with money-laundering allegations, died in Colorado before

he could be extradited for trial in the UK.

In the Belling case, the cash-strapped company, famed among students for its Baby Belling cooker, was persuaded to hand over a £3.5 million fee from the firm's pension fund to Deacon, a "trusted" solicitor.

The firm was shown a forged letter purported to be from Lord Tugendhat, then NatWest deputy chairman, talking about a £750 million "facility".

As is the case with "advanced fee" fraud, however, the victim hands over the arrangement fee upfront, usually to cover the so-called first year's interest payments, and never receives the money.

Belling could not withstand the blow and went into receivership in 1992. It is still not clear whether the Belling pension scheme will ever fully recover all the missing funds and therefore be able to meet all its future liabilities to its

members. Besides Belling other victims included Russia's largest co-operative, Finland's largest food processing company and a Danish investor.

In some cases, the fraudsters — described by John Goldring, QC, the successful SFO prosecutor, as "accomplished liars" — claimed that they were acting for the CIA on the direct authorisation of George Bush, then US President. Savage, who produced bogus letters from the former President, claimed to be a senior CIA agent.

Police believe that Deacon and Fuller, who claimed to be one glib victim that he was the inventor of the world's first heart-lung machine, were part of a 12-strong gang — four in America, the rest in Britain. To make sure they had their stories off-pat, a number of them would regularly meet to rehearse their carefully crafted lies.

Deacon used more than £1

million to repay a personal debt that he had assumed in connection with his involvement with a theatre in Stoke-on-Trent and paid off an overdraft which at one point stood at more than £100,000.

In his opening speech of the case last October, Mr Goldring told the central London court: "You may think it would be a difficult task to steal this amount. It is simpler than you think. All you need is a little nerve and a total disregard for the truth."

The jury of five men and six women took four hours to consider three and a half months of evidence and return unanimous verdicts. They were given a majority direction by the judge on two further deception counts still outstanding against the lawyer.

Deacon, who practised in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, and Fuller face up to 14 years in jail when they appear before Judge Fabyan Evans, QC, for sentencing today.

Sir Rocco aims to buy back Forte hotel chains

By MELVYN MARCUS AND ALAN DAIR MURRAY

SIR ROCCO FORTE surprised the City yesterday with the news that he is working on a potential £2.5 billion management buyout of the Forte hotel empire — a little more than 24 hours after Granada emerged as victor in the £3.8 billion takeover battle.

Gerry Robinson, chairman designate of Granada, was informed by Sir Rocco of his intentions at yesterday's 3pm meeting at Forte's High Holborn HQ. Sir Rocco's buyout plans embrace Forte's Exclusive, Meridian and Heritage hotel brands, along with certain other hotel assets.

In a brief statement last night, Sir Rocco said: "I am leading a team working on a plan to purchase from Granada the hotel business of Forte other than Posthouse and Travelodge. My objective is to make a detailed proposal to Granada in the coming weeks." He added: "I believe that the new Forte company which could emerge is better placed than any other purchaser to develop the value of the Meridian, Exclusive and Heritage brands, and the London hotels."

Sir Rocco said he was working to a short time-frame but no further details could be made public now. According to Sir Rocco, the meeting with Mr Robinson "was constructive and went well." Sir Rocco, who would be joined by his family as investors, is being advised by SBC Warburg, Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan, Cazenove and UBS — the same advisers that defended Forte against Granada.

Mr Robinson is believed to favour the sale of Forte's quality hotels to one suitor for tax reasons. The Forte family's 8 per cent stake in Forte is worth about £330 million and it is no secret that Sir Rocco had organised lines of credit of up to £250 million to mount a

defensive share raid. Granada responded by saying it had only announced its intention to dispose of the Meridian and Exclusive chains, but would be happy to talk to Sir Rocco and his team when he had put together an offer. Granada added it would pursue talks with other interested parties.

Several other potential buyers also publicly expressed interest in Forte's assets. Regal Hotels, which agreed the £122 million purchase of the White Hart hotel chain with Forte only last Saturday, said that the deal remained on the table. The 72 White Hart hotels fit into the mid-market range targeted by Granada, but the hotels are much smaller than Forte's other mid-market chains, Crest and Posthouse.

Regal offered Forte a mixture of cash and convertible preference shares for the purchase and while Granada has said that it is unenthusiastic about anything but cash deals, it is understood that Regal has made contingency plans for alternative financing.

Accor, the French hotel company, said it was assessing the Meridian chain, which the company lost to Forte 18 months ago in a £280 million bid battle. Accor, which is heavily laden with debt, stressed that it would look for external financing for the deal but would provide management at the chain. The Meridian chain, which now includes 85 sites after the conversion of the Forte grand format into the brand, is valued at about £800 million. Skale, the hotels and casino company, said it was also interested in potential purchases but had no strategic plan for acquisitions. Granada shares jumped 29p to close at 707p.

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Tempus, page 26
City Diary, page 27

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FT-SE 100	3758.2	(-23.2)
Yield	3.60%	
FT-SE All share	1037.17	(+9.95)
Nikkei	20312.74	(+231.82)
New York	5243.57	(+61.30)*
Dow Jones	818.12	(+5.34)*
S&P Composite		

US RATE

Federal Funds	5 1/8%	(8 1/8%)
Life long gilt	11 1/8%	(11 1/8%)
Yield	6.04%	(6.10%)

LONDON MONEY

3-month interbank	6 1/8%	(6 1/8%)
Future (Mar)	11 1/8%	(11 1/8%)

STERLING

New York	1.8090*	(1.8143)
London	1.8085	(1.8137)
Frankfurt	1.8085	(1.8137)
Paris	1.8085	(1.8137)
Switzerland	1.8085	(1.8137)
Yen	161.44	(161.13)
£ index	92.1	(92.0)

DOLLAR

London	1.4850*	(1.4790)
Frankfurt	1.4850*	(1.4790)
Paris	1.4850*	(1.4790)
Switzerland	1.4850*	(1.4790)
Yen	106.83*	(106.93)
£ index	92.2	(92.0)

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Apr)	\$16.85	(\$16.45)
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GOLD

London close	\$402.88	(\$402.90)
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* denotes midday trading price

Adviser accused

A Government adviser who approved an £850,000 grant to a West Country computer company later became its chairman before it collapsed with debts of £2 million. MPs were told yesterday. Kenneth Holmes was accused of vetting the grant application from the Rom Data Corporation before joining the board of the Falmouth company. Page 24

Accountancy

The £200 million defeat suffered by Glaxo at the hands of the Inland Revenue over the prices subsidiary companies within the group charge each other has gripped the accounting profession's profession. Page 28

Shake-up at British Gas

By ROSS TIEHAN
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

BRITISH GAS is appointing a new finance director, and a new head of strategy and communications, in an effort to reinforce its top management and polish its public image.

Roy Gardner, finance director, will relinquish responsibility for the accounts to concentrate on negotiating the £40 billion of take-or-pay gas purchase contracts, and oversee the company's response to the introduction of competition in the household market. With the move comes a £20,000 pay rise, to £320,000.

The finance job goes to Philip Hampton, 42, the £280,945-a-year British Steel finance director. Mr Hampton, a former director of Lazard Brothers, the merchant bank, will earn £295,000, and receive a one-off



Hampton: options payout

£70,000 payment as compensation for losing his £63,400 British Steel share options.

The appointment of John Wybrew as £275,000 director of strategic planning and communications creates a new post. Mr Wybrew, 54, joins

from Royal Dutch/Shell where he headed the response to challenges by environmental campaigners over plans to dump the Brent Spar oil rig at sea, and over its record in Ogoniland, Nigeria. Peter Sanguinetti, the incumbent head of corporate communications, will remain in post, reporting to Mr Wybrew.

Each of the new directors will be allowed to join British Gas's new long-term incentive scheme, which holds shares in trust for executives until the share price has improved over several years.

The moves show a determination by British Gas to respond more effectively to its estimated £1.5 billion liabilities to buy unwanted gas, and to adjust to competition for its 18 million domestic customers.

Pennington, page 25

McAlpine sheds 300 jobs and core work

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

ALFRED MCALPINE yesterday pulled out of core construction work. It said it will shed 300 jobs on top of 350 that have already been axed from its general building division with the closure of its traditional open tender business.

Blaming too many players chasing too little work, the company expects costs of redundancies and other reorganisation of £33 million. Oliver Whitehead, chief executive, said: "It wasn't easy for us to take this decision as the company was founded on such work, but we have been forced to realise that there is no future in it for us."

McAlpine will no longer be involved in general construc-

tion such as offices and public authority buildings. It is to take on higher value work such as sports stadia, leisure schemes and private finance initiative work, and has pledged a commitment to housebuilding.

The company said the radical reorganisation will mean a substantial loss for 1995, but it was hopeful of prospects beyond that. The share price ended 10p higher at 158p. McAlpine had signalled savage cuts last September, when it said that construction had run into a £2.3 million loss for the first half of the year. It has cut down the business over the past few years.

Tempus, page 26

Bradford & Bingley makes loyalty rate cut

By ANNE ASHWORTH

THE Bradford & Bingley, the seventh largest building society, yesterday cut its mortgage rate to 7.24 per cent — the lowest standard variable rate available — as part of a scheme to return £50 million in profits to savers and borrowers in improved rates. The 0.25 percentage point cut will reduce monthly payments on a £60,000 mortgage by £10.

The Alliance & Leicester Building Society is also to announce a loyalty

package for its customers, despite its plans to become a bank and seek a stock-market flotation. The A&L, which is expected to make public its conversion plans on February 1, will unveil its loyalty scheme towards the end of March. A&L confirmed yesterday that the society's board had already approved the scheme. No details are as yet available.

To date, loyalty and bonus schemes have been associated with societies wedded to mutual status. The societies aim to show that mutuality can have a tangible long-term value, equal in the

payouts now on offer when societies, such as the Halifax and the Woolwich, join the stock market. Despite persistent conversion and takeover rumours, the B&B's strong commitment to mutuality is clear. Its £50 million giveaway will be shared half and half between savers and borrowers.

The society says that its savers' rates would be, on average, 0.25 per cent above those of the competition. For both new and existing borrowers, it will reduce its variable mortgage rate from March 1. Those who arrange their mortgages through the B&B's

direct mortgage arm will now pay a variable rate of 6.25 per cent. Geoffrey Lister, B&B chief executive, said: "Our strong capital ratios, key measures of balance sheet strength, will be maintained at current high levels."

B&B's 1995 results will be out next month. Profits are likely to be slightly higher than 1994's £160 million. The Britannia Building Society, the eighth largest, will shortly make an announcement about its long-expected mutuality reward scheme.

Pennington, page 25



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Rumours of Soros selling and bid talk rattle shares

It was another volatile day for the London market, dominated by falling bond markets after rumours that George Soros, the international speculator, was a big seller, and by more bid talk and a couple of large share placings.

The largest of these came as Midland Bank offered its remaining 5.3 per cent stake in 31 Group, the venture capital group floated in July 1994 at 272p. James Capel, which is owned by HSBC, Midland's parent, was said to have placed 30 million shares at 400p a share.

Last year, Midland reduced its 31 stake from 7.9 per cent to 5.3 per cent as part of last June's £440 million share sale by four bank shareholders. At the time, Lloyds and the Bank of England sold their entire stakes, while Barclays lowered its stake from 8.2 per cent to 5.5 per cent. Bank of Scotland and NatWest, 31's other bank shareholders, held on to their stakes of 2.5 per cent and 17.8 per cent respectively.

31 shares ended 3p lower at 413p, on heavy volume of 62.4 million shares traded. HSBC dipped to 610p, while Lloyds TSB fell to 337p on volume of 11.6 million shares, and NatWest 7p to 667p. Bank of Scotland added 5p to 309p.

Meanwhile, equities failed to hold on to modest early gains as declining bond markets on both sides of the Atlantic combined with a negative start to trading on Wall Street. The US markets were again unsettled by fears that Congress may not pass the necessary legislation to allow the Government to cover its budget deficit.

Sentiment was also hit by late speculation, but incorrect, talk that Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, was going to criticise the Chancellor's recent interest rate cut in a speech he was due to deliver at the London School of Economics last night.

The FT-SE 100 index ended near its worst of the day, closing down 24 points at 3,734.2. Second-liners fared better, with the FT-SE 250 only slipping 0.2 to 4,086.7. Volume, swollen by substantial placings in 31 and BAA, reached 857 million at the official close.

BAA, the airports operator, ended unchanged at 496p on heavy volume of 62.8 million shares traded after the Gov-



Torquil Norman, chairman, saw Bluebird shares jump 15p

ernment sold its 2.9 per cent stake. The Treasury raised about £140 million after selling about 29.5 million BAA shares to Merrill Lynch Smith New Court, the stockbroker, which in turn passed them on to institutions in a placing at 494p a share.

Shares in Granada, which this week won control of the Forté empire after its hostile

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be a potential break-up candidate, was the best performer among FT-SE stocks, with the shipping to property group steaming ahead 12p to 529p.

Toy companies were also the centre of speculative interest in the wake of the \$5.2 billion hostile offer from Mattel, the US toy group whose empire spans Barbie dolls to Fisher Price products, for Hasbro, its American rival. Among possible UK targets, Bluebird Toys, which is 6.7 per cent owned by Hasbro and is one of the UK's few remaining independent toy groups, jumped to 363p before ending at 354p, up 15p.

Games Workshop added 7p to 295p, and Toy Options firmed 2p to 98p.

Lasmo was also a good market, adding 2p to 172p, before a Nigerian drilling report next week.

British Biotech continued its remarkable advance, surging to £23.58 before closing at £22.38, up 70p, for a two-day gain of 268p. The shares have more than trebled in the past six months as investors become increasingly optimistic about prospects for Marimastat, the company's new cancer treatment which is undergoing trials.

Elsewhere, Cantab Pharmaceuticals surged 85p to 530p, Corteca 35p to 270p, Scotia 19p to 503p and Anagen 5p to 75p. ML Laboratories, meanwhile, raced to an all-time high of 457p, up 46p at 400p after accompanying increased losses with a £25 million cash call.

Holliday Chemical dived 45p to 189p after issuing a profits warning. The warning unsettled others in the sector, with Yorkshire Chemicals down 22p to 259p, Laporte 13p to 644p, ICI 18p to 386p and Combe 15p to 432p.

GLT-EDGED: Glits suffered widespread falls. The March loan gift future lost 20 ticks to £111.75 on volume of 65,000 contracts. Among conventional stocks, five-year issues fell by about £4, while losses extended to £4 among longer-dated stocks.

NEW YORK: A sell-off in the US bond market continued to weigh on Wall Street shares and kept them trading lower at midday. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 14.09 at 5,228.75. Analysts said the market was also falling prey to some profit taking after a steep run, mostly concentrated in the Dow 30.

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BOEING is back on top in its battle with Airbus Industrie, the European plane-makers' consortium. The American firm is gaining ground just as demand for airliners begins to recover from a four-year slide.

The negative impact of a ten-week machine-strike coloured yesterday's figures from the Seattle manufacturer. Nevertheless, Boeing shareholders have Airbus to thank for the leaner and meaner look of the American company.

During 1994, and for the first time, Airbus booked more new orders than Boeing. The Americans responded with aggressive discounting, offering airlines planes for delivery in four years at prices 25 per cent below the current cost of production.

These deals are backed by a cost-cutting drive that Airbus cannot possibly match. The

European consortium is hamstrung by its ownership structure, which gives the partners insufficient incentive to cut costs. Although British Aerospace, a 20 per cent partner, claims to be the world's most cost-competitive aerostructures company, Airbus is weighed down by the strength of the mark, the franc and the social costs of its French, German and Spanish partners.

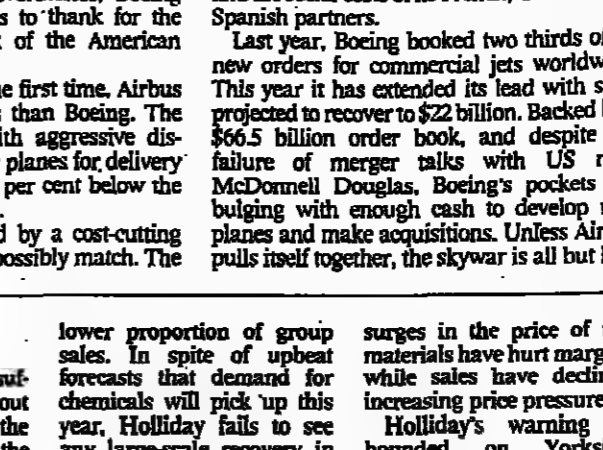
Last year, Boeing booked two thirds of all new orders for commercial jets worldwide. This year it has extended its lead with sales projected to reach \$22 billion. Backed by a \$66.5 billion order book, and despite the failure of merger talks with US rival McDonnell Douglas, Boeing's pockets are bulging with enough cash to develop new planes and make acquisitions. Unless Airbus pulls itself together, the skywar is all but lost.

lower proportion of group sales. In spite of upbeat forecasts that demand for chemicals will pick up this year, Holliday falls to see any large-scale recovery in its sales or its order book.

Holliday earns a living from several niche chemical products, including textile dyestuffs, hairdyes and photographic materials. Huge

surges in the price of raw materials have hurt margins, while sales have declined, increasing price pressure.

Holliday's warning rebounded on Yorkshire Chemicals, which is also exposed to dyestuffs. Without signs of renewed demand, investors are better off with minimal exposure to the chemicals cycle.



BURTON failed dismally to talk down its prospects yesterday. Words of caution received scant attention from analysts as they swiftly upgraded their profit forecasts for the retailing group.

Burton has long been dubbed a recovery stock, but until last year showed little evidence of living up to the title. Generating less than £100 million in profits from almost £2 billion in turnover, there certainly has been room for improvement.

The first sign of recovery was last year's sharp climb in margin, helping profits to more than double. Yesterday's news that the gain in gross margin had slipped from 2.2 per cent to 1.9 per cent was not unexpected.

Instead of worrying that the pace of growth was slowing, the market took comfort from good like-for-like sales growth and evidence that margins are still on the rise.

With raised profit expectations, the shares are trading on about 19 times earnings and at a 40 per cent premium to the sector. The recovery is still gathering steam, and so should the shares.

Mersey Docks LIKE the proverbial bad penny, labour problems have continued to haunt the Liverpool docks. Mersey Docks and Harbour Company shareholders will witness the idea of paying up to £3 million to dockers who abandoned their jobs in a quixotic gesture of support towards redundant employees of a separate, and now defunct, stevedoring company.

It may, however, turn out to be money well spent. Britain has too many ports to service a small island, and rivals of Mersey Docks were busy seducing its shipping customers while the docks stood idle at the Royal Seaford Docks. The company claims to have retained all its important customers, but, even so,

they will have seized the opportunity to seek concessions from Mersey Docks in exchange for continued loyalty to Liverpool.

However, Mersey Docks has extracted an important gain from the strike. Productivity has vastly improved at the container terminal; jobs taken over by shippers and new working practices have cut manning levels by half, a cost-saving that should make Liverpool more competitive and able to attract more custom.

Many of the dockers sacked in the dispute were approaching retirement; their age must partly explain their bizarre attempt to force a revival of the National Dock Labour Scheme. A reversal of the growth in activity over the past five years at the Port of Liverpool would kill off attempts to revive business on Merseyside, and the hope must be that the settlement will allow old wounds to heal.

EDITED BY CARL MORTISHED

NEW YORK (midday): Dow Jones 5228.75 (+14.09) S&P Composite 618.46 (+1.49)

Tokyo: Nikkei Average 20414.99 (+101.99) Hang Seng 11103.08 (+142.87)

Amsterdam: AEX 308.01 (+0.04) Sydney: All Ordinaries 2283.9 (+18.2)

Frankfurt: DAX 2443.72 (+20.65) Singapore: SENSEX 3433.00 (+20.78)

Brussels: C20 6863.46 (+25.42) Paris: CAC-40 1950.19 (+4.22)

Zurich: SMI 720.70 (+2.89) London: FT 30 3734.2 (-24.6)

FT 100 3734.2 (-24.6) FT 250 4086.7 (-0.2)

FTSE 100 Index 3734.2 (-24.6) FTSE 250 Index 4086.7 (-0.2)

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Fax: 0171 522 0095

The merged bank, to be called Wells Fargo, will be the eighth largest in the US with assets of \$108 billion.

Bankers Trust has already paid \$14 million to Gibson Greetings and \$12 million to Federal Paper Board, as well as a \$10 million fine to the Securities & Exchange Commission.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Standard Chartered on bid alert as shares soar

STANDARD Chartered went on bid alert again last night as its share price surged 43p to a new high of 662p. Turnover in the shares was low, with less than 3 million changing hands, although the word is that Garmore, the fund manager, and at least one American institution were trying to pick-up stock.

Brokers say that much of the rise could be attributed to stock shortages on the part of market-makers. But one thing the company was not short of yesterday was potential suitors. Weekend reports had suggested a bid from rival National Westminster Bank, up 6p at 674p.

It is a story that most traders in the stock have been quick to discount. However, other names have now started to feature, including Deutsche Bank, which already owns Morgan Grenfell, the merchant bank, and Dresdner Bank, which last year splashed out £500 million-plus for Kleinwort Benson.

A Standard spokesman said: "We have no information and would not comment on market rumours."

Elsewhere, the market continued its record-breaking run, cheered by a strong start to trading on Wall Street. Hopes are high that next week's meeting of the Federal Reserve Open Markets Committee will signal a cut in US interest rates.

The FT-SE 100 index closed at its best of the day with a rise of 23.2 to a new high of 3,758.2.

As the dust continues to settle after Granada's successful bid for Forte, investors began looking around for other companies in the sector in which to invest. Top of the list was Ladbrokes, which responded with a rise of 8p to 172p. The shares have been supported in recent months by talk of a possible bid from Bass, 4p dearer at 736p.

Rank Organisation was another beneficiary of the flow of funds out of Forte, adding 7p at 451p. It also drew strength from some encouraging trading news from Rank Xerox.

Sir Rocco Forte's pledge to rebuild the family business from scratch did not fall on deaf ears. The family is reckoned to be set to pick up £300 million from the sale of their shares, which could be ploughed into a new venture. As a result, there were mark-ups for Plaza Express, 1p up at



Signs of a building recovery were provided by Alfred McAlpine

262p, and Myklada Town, up 12p at 132p.

Marks & Spencer, the subject of some high-profile criticism recently, perked up with a 3p rise to 438p after an encouraging trading statement. General sales over the Christmas period grew 6.7 per cent, with food sales 6.1 per cent higher.

Burton Group, which is

90p on the news that rival Bellway has bought close to a 5 per cent stake. This has raised hopes that Bellway may be poised to make a full bid. Only last week, Wainhomes plunged to 65p after revealing that it was the subject of an investigation by the fraud squad over valuation irregularities at its northern division dating back to last year.

News of an encouraging drilling report hoisted Cairn Energy 35p to 179p as almost 5 million shares changed hands. The group says that its Sangul exploration well in Block 16 offshore of Bangladesh is now operating at total depth.

A testing programme is now underway and the rig will move to a new position 3.5 miles north of Sangul.

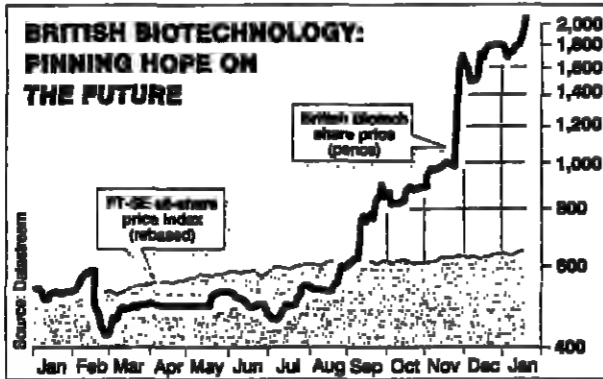
Loarho fell 3 1/2p to 201p despite news that Ashanti, in which it has a 41 per cent stake, has applied for a listing on the New York Stock Exchange. Shareholders at Ashanti's AGM in Ghana were told the move would raise its international profile. Ashanti is one of The Times mining shares of the year.

due to issue a trading statement today, finished 2p lighter at 129p.

News of two boardroom appointments had little effect on the price of British Gas shares, down 1p to 248p. Philip Hampton has been appointed interim chief, with John Wybrew director responsible for strategic planning and corporate affairs. Wainhomes rallied 10p to

Two employees have been sacked and another two suspended. The board also called for the resignation of Ron Smith, chief executive, claiming they had lost confidence in him following the latest profits warning.

Signs of a long-awaited recovery in the housebuilding sector were also provided by Alfred McAlpine, which has decided to concentrate on its



housing activities. The group yesterday announced plans to close its open ended construction business at a cost of £34 million. Despite this, the shares rose 10p to 158p.

Earlier this week, the Berkeley Group, another housebuilder, unveiled plans to raise £75 million in order to take advantage of depressed prices and increase the size of its land bank.

British Biotechnology soared to yet another new peak with a leap of 198p to £21.68. Investors are becoming increasingly excited about the prospects for Marimastat, its new cancer treatment, which is currently undergoing trials. James Crean stood over a leap of 30p to 243p. Inisheer, a company in which Crean has a 71.2 per cent stake, has received a bid approach at a significant premium to the current bid price.

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A testing programme is now underway and the rig will move to a new position 3.5 miles north of Sangul.

GLT-EDGED: Prices traded in a narrow range for much of the day, with buying interest muted ahead of next week's meeting of the FOMC and gilt auction.

The Bank of England was on hand to issue further tranches of existing stock, including £150 million of Treasury Index-linked 4 1/2 per cent 2004 and £100 million of Treasury Index-linked 2 1/2 per cent 2013.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt traded in a range of £111.25 to £112.25 before finishing £111.25, better at £111.25. A total of 57,000 contracts were completed.

In the cash market, Treasury 3 per cent 2013 climbed 1/8 to £103 1/8, while at the shorter end Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was 7 1/2 better at £101 1/2.

NEW YORK: Shares were strong at midday, with the Dow Jones industrial average up 51.30 points at 5,243.57 amid signs of conciliation on the budget deadlock, a strong bond market and a rally in many high-technology issues.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):
Dow Jones 5243.57 (+51.30)
S&P Composite 618.13 (+3.94)

Tokyo:
Nikkei Average 20812.74 (+231.82)
Hang Seng 10962.21 (+2.99)

Amsterdam:
DAX Index 508.69 (+1.89)
Sydney:
ASX 2235.7 (+1.05)

Frankfurt:
DAX 2423.07 (+38.60)
Singapore:
Straits 2410.25 (+2.75)

Brussels:
General 8888.58 (+7.93)
Paris:
CAC-40 1945.97 (+11.89)

Zurich:
SIX Gen 723.50 (+1.30)

London:
FT 100 2788.2 (+14.8)
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TEMPUS

Who pays for the bids?

MPs and others are in a flap about the costs of Granada's takeover of Forte. The total figure — in the region of £135 million — is a big number, but in itself says nothing about the larger question of whether takeovers ever justify their costs. Granada's own £105 million bid looks huge, but £20 million represents stamp duty and a further £70 million relates to underwriting costs.

Underwriting is a method of insuring against the fall in value of shares issued to finance an offer. The OFT and the London Business School have rightly criticised high underwriting fees: these fixed charges are often unrelated to specific company risks, but underwriting per se is no more of a cost to society than general insurance.

Academics are divided over whether bids enhance shareholder value. However, there is no clear evidence that costs are increasing. According to *Acquisitions Monthly*, fees paid for takeovers in the 1989 boom were £800

million, 2.8 per cent of the £28 billion value of the offers, compared with £950 million of fees, 2.6 per cent of offers last year.

More worthy of criticism are the advisory bills accumulated by Forte. Granada will inherit some £30 million of fees charged by sundry merchant bankers and lawyers, more than twice the cost of its own advisers. Bidders must budget carefully if they are not to squander the benefits of a takeover, but targets have no such discipline and, like Forte, can hire armies of advisers knowing that failure simply means handing the bill to the aggressor. More galling to shareholders is the knowledge that Forte could certainly have avoided its fate and great expense, had it taken good advice earlier and made the disposals it proposed during the bid.

In future, if investors are not prepared to take the initiative and demand the removal of lazy bosses, they will continue to pay for takeovers.

Alfred McAlpine

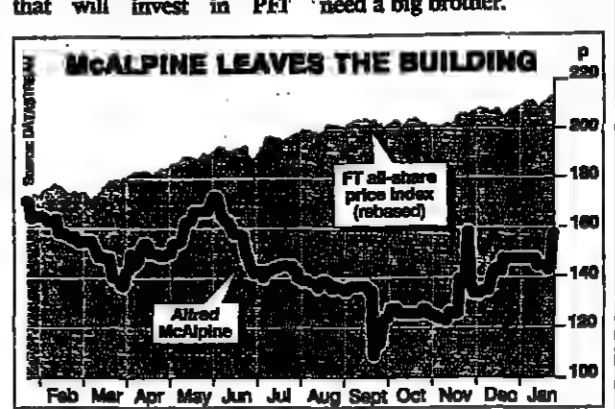
IF THE chairman of building companies were as brave as their words, the industry's problems would be solved overnight. However, writing about overcapacity is easier than trimming your sails. Many companies prefer to subsidise their contracting arms from profitable aggregates or homes operations rather than take on the dirty job of closures and sackings.

The ostrich approach is about to change, however, for two reasons. Builders struggled with thin margins for years, relying on the cashflow from pre-payments to keep the business ticking over. Profits were a happy accident from successful claims for cost-overruns. Today, cashflow is turning negative as margins are too thin to cover costs and the economics of the industry no

longer tolerate inefficiencies.

Yesterday, the stock market patted Alfred McAlpine on the back for being the first big quoted builder to shut down its traditional building operations. McAlpine is shrinking the company down to the housing division and civil engineering operations plus a specialised unit that will invest in PFI

projects, such as roads, hospitals and other local authority schemes. McAlpine's move will stem huge losses, but there is a question mark over whether it has the strength and cashflow to expand housing and PFI projects that demand capital injections. The company is better placed, but may still need a big brother.



WH Smith

ADMISSION of a problem is often the first crucial step towards recovery, and, hopefully, WH Smith is no exception.

Bill Cockburn is right to identify a culture problem at the group. Retailing is not a picnic: aggressive rivals have eaten into WH Smith's core business, and the group's gentlemanly response has proved lamentably inept.

It is too early to tell whether Cockburn will succeed in sweeping out the cobwebs and cosy culture, but he is making the right noises.

Yesterday's interim results revealed both new and old problems: poor distribution meant that stores were left with the wrong stock and extra costs over the critical Christmas period. Competition has forced the group to forfeit margin in order to win

sales. Elsewhere, the trading environment has hurt WH Smith in several areas — new contracts with publishers have eaten away at newspaper distribution margins, while the demise of the net book agreement means that Waterstone's has to sell three discounted books rather than two just to stand still.

Cockburn has yet to complete his strategic review. Nothing is ruled out and a further restructuring charge is not out of the question, especially as Cockburn has stated he intends to remove more cost from the group.

For now there is little besides rhetoric on which to judge the group's fortunes, and the shares are best left alone until Cockburn reveals his hand.

Wainhomes

WHATEVER the intentions of Belway, it has made an

instant profit from its purchase of shares in Wainhomes.

Wainhomes's share price took an excessive beating last week when the police moved in to investigate "accounting irregularities". The chairman sacked the chief executive for an alleged "loss of confidence" and the price plunged to 64p. Whatever the hit to profits from a restatement of work in progress, analysts still reckon that the net asset value of the builder is worth up to 94p.

Those builders still committed to the homes market are looking for quick ways to build up stock, and takeovers are an obvious route, but no one should expect a hostile bid for Wainhomes: the management still control 42 per cent of the company. With land prices now more reasonable, sensible builders will not become predators.

EDITED BY CARL MORTSHED

COMMODITIES

LONDON COMMODITY EXCHANGE

Mar 1996 1000-1020
May 1996 1000-1020
Jul 1996 1000-1020
Sep 1996 1000-1020
Dec 1996 1000-1020

ROBUSTA COFFEE

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WHITE SUGAR

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MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION

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LIFE OPTIONS

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CRUDE OILS

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WHEAT

WHEAT (US)

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THE TIMES

CITY DIARY

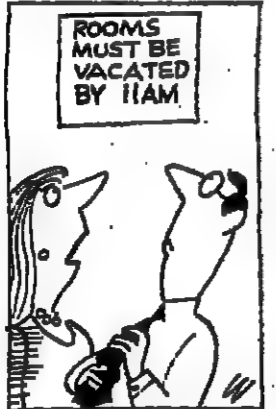
Irish eyes eye Forte

IN SPITE of Gerry Robinson's repeated assertions to the contrary, the great Forte sell-off may already have begun. You know the kind of thing: ageing but still attractive hotel, one careful owner, all offers considered.

City Diary has already been approached by one Irish solicitor, representing a group of businessmen with eyes on the Belfast Forte Crest. What are the chances of a purchase, he asked, and to whom should he talk? In faithful service to its readers, we have furnished the solicitor with Granada's telephone number.

Power play

LAURA ASHLEY, the womenswear and furnishing retailer, is decidedly more feminine of late. And Iverson yesterday rounded off a recruitment spree with her fifth female appointment since she took over as chief executive last September. Kathy Self becomes senior vice-president of retail operations in North America, joining Patricia Manning, marketing director, Deborah Baker, human resources director, Julie Ramshaw, merchandising director, and Basha Cohen, design and buying director. The five join Ms Iverson on the 11-strong executive committee, resulting in the rare occurrence of women outnumbering men at such a senior level.



"Thought you said Granada was in no hurry to sell"

Explosive work

REVIEWERS may rave "you must read this book", but few carry the authority of Ian Plenderleith, Bank of England director and official government broker. He told investors and traders gathered at the Grosvenor Hall yesterday that the new £45 Merrill Lynch Guide to the Gilt-Edged and Sterling Bond Markets was "essential reading". He would, he added, be conducting tests back at the Bank to make sure people had done their homework. These tests could prove alarming given that Plenderleith believes that Patrick Phillips, the author, former De Zoete broker and now Merrill consultant, is "the first rocket scientist of the gilt-edged market, our own Werner von Braun".

COLIN CAMPBELL

Stakeholder debate ought to focus on social issues not merely economics

It has not been a good week for the "stakeholder economy". On Monday, we had the announcement by Daimler-Benz, perhaps the world's greatest stakeholder company, of the biggest loss in the history of German capitalism, immediately followed by exactly the kind of "short-termist" panic measure denounced by the stakeholder camp: the closure of the entire Dutch aircraft industry and the relocation of tens of thousands of German jobs to cheap-labour plants abroad.

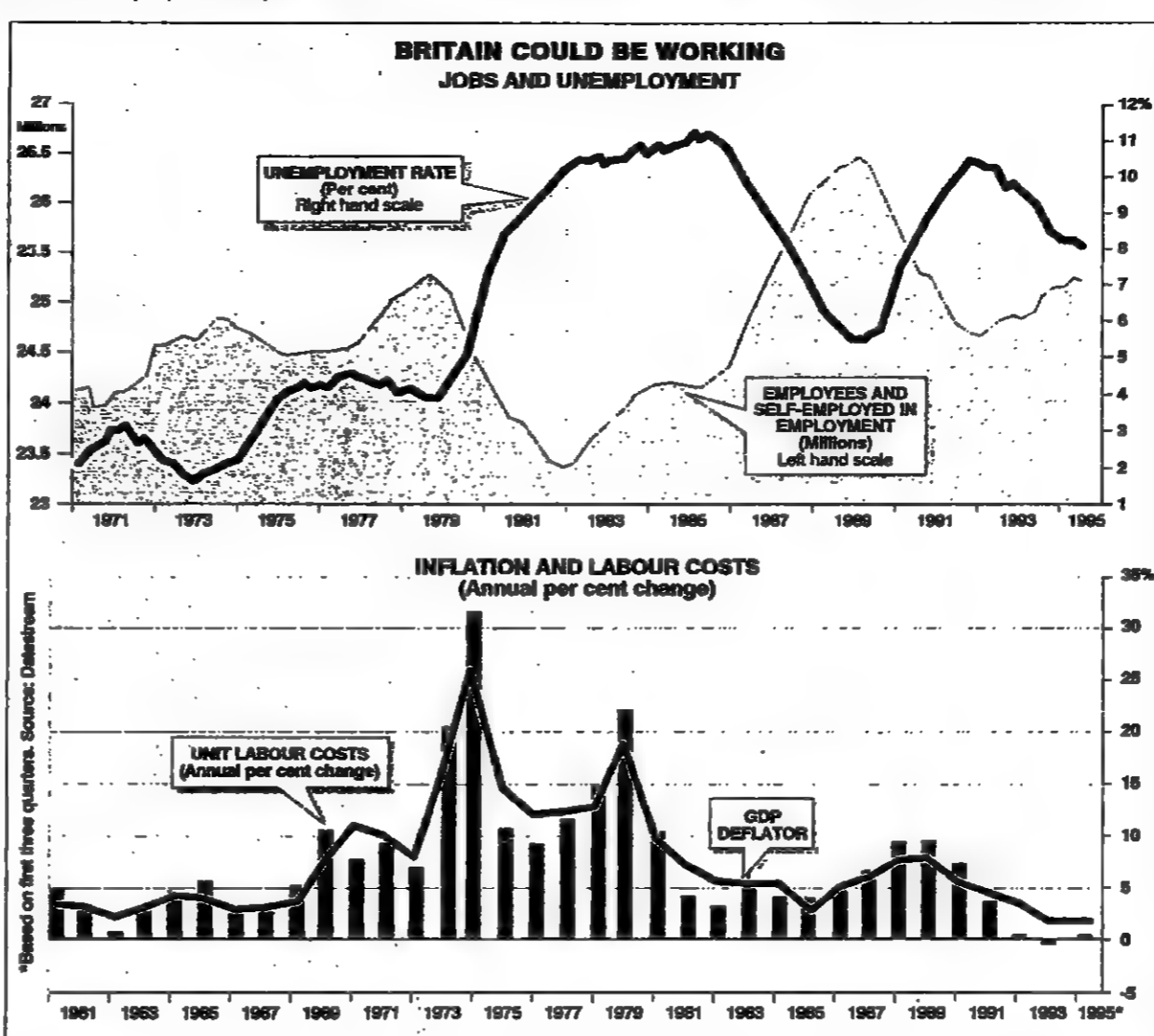
On Tuesday, there was the takeover of Forte by Granada, a classic short-termist asset-stripping operation. At first sight, this raid seemed just the sort of outrage that stakeholdering is designed to stamp out. On closer inspection, however, the success of the bid turned out to be a direct involvement in both Granada's and Forte's corporate affairs of an active long-term shareholder — in this case Mercury Asset Management.

This takeover was driven by the enthusiastic commitment to Granada's strategy of active shareholders such as Carol Galley, MAM's suddenly famous vice-chairman. It is true that other stakeholders in the bid were not consulted, but does anyone think that Ms Galley's decision would have been any different if she had invited in a delegation of Forte workers and suppliers for a cup of tea? In this case, the supposed cure of "hands-on" active shareholders turned out to be the cause of the disease.

Yesterday, the stakeholder news got even worse with the attacks on Harriet Harman. Ms Harman had undertaken the ultimate stakeholder action. She had asserted her right and duty to play an active role in her son's education and at the same time cast the clearest possible vote of no confidence in the decision of central London's schools after 17 years of Tory government. For this, she was pilloried by the very people in the Labour Party who say they want to transform Britain from a nation of consumers and shopkeepers into a nation of active citizens — of people who can work together through non-market social mechanisms without money always having to change hands.

Personally, I think Tony Blair was on the right track two weeks ago when he set forth his vision of creating a "stakeholders' Britain". What he seemed to mean was that the realm of politics should be expanded to many areas of life in Britain that had been taken over by market forces.

By relying too much on market forces in areas such as health, education, law, the arts and the relief of poverty, the Tories have probably done Britain more harm than good. These basic values of a civilised society are not commodities, whose production and distribution should be governed simply by buying at the



cheapest price and selling to the highest bidder. The principle of one man one vote should not be entirely superseded by one pound one vote.

The trouble is that the history of the "stakeholder" concept, at least in Britain, suggests a much narrower focus on economic and financial, rather than social issues. The claims made are economic, rather than social or moral. The stakeholder economy is said to be more efficient and better at taking long-term decisions. It is supposed to be good not only for the soul, but also for economic growth.

One danger for Labour policy, however, is that broader ideas about making British society fairer, more civilised and democratic will be neglected or discredited if the narrow economic claims made by the stakeholder lobby are seen to fail. Another is the danger that by focusing economic policy on microeconomic supply-side issues, such as corporate governance and financial regulation, a Labour government will be distracted from the infinitely more important task of managing demand for full employment and rapid growth.

The only real economic debate in the general election now looks like being the clash between stakeholders and free marketeers. Labour will claim that short-termism and low investment are at the root of Britain's alleged economic failure; the Tories will insist that their free-market policies have energised the economy and now promise to make Britain

the most dynamic and prosperous country in Europe.

This clash of ideas will no doubt throw up all kinds of interesting theories and statistics. This week, for example, Michael Kitson and Jonathan Michie, of Cambridge University, have published an article in the *Economic Journal* showing that Britain's net manufacturing investment between 1979 and 1989 fell to one-seventh of its pre-1973 level. They see this decline as an unmitigated disaster and attribute it largely to short-termism and the "role of the City of London in the functioning of the economy and the formulation of policy".

Meanwhile, Patrick Minford, of Liverpool University, claims to have evidence that Labour's plans to regulate employment and adopt the European social chapter could destroy three million jobs.

Neither of these claims — nor any others like them — will ever settle the question of whether the British economy would benefit from more or less regulation. Every statistic on one side can be matched by one figure the other side can quote. In the Kitson-Michie article, for example, there is a footnote which admits that Britain's gross manufacturing investment in the 1980s was almost identical to that in Germany and France. The difference was that Britain scrapped far more of its outdated and uncompetitive factories. Many of these were the legacy of state-sponsored over-investment in industries such as steel, shipbuilding and cars.

A general election is certainly not the appropriate forum for settling such arcane academic disputes — especially when there is another issue of far greater economic substance which the politicians really could get their teeth into. This is the incredible incompetence of British monetary, fiscal and exchange-rate policy since 1976, when Jim Callaghan made his famous speech repudiating Keynesian economics and Denis Healey blazed the monetarist trail for Margaret Thatcher.

Twenty years on, it is surely time for a total review — one might almost say a witch-hunt into — this catastrophic experiment. By abandoning the active management of demand, which had been the centrepiece of economic policy since the Keynesian revolution, the monetarist zealots did not merely create two horrendous recessions. They also managed to wreck any hope of a free-market miracle in the late 1980s.

We will never know whether the labour market and financial liberalisation of the 1980s really did strengthen the economy, because John Major's demand management policies deliberately pushed the economy into recession just as the supply-side reforms were taking hold. And even today, the Treasury's determination to repress demand growth to around the "trend rate" 2.5 per cent means there are no tangible gains from the Thatcher revolution which voters can identify.

In exactly the same way,

the present deflationary framework of demand management — which neither Tony Blair nor Gordon Brown have ever seen fit to question — will make it literally impossible to judge whether a Labour government's supply-side policies can create full employment, or indeed do any good at all.

By far the most important — and mysterious — question of political economy in Britain today is why politicians of all parties have joined this conspiracy of silence on demand management. The Government, I suppose, is reluctant to debate macroeconomic policy because most of the blame for wrecking the Thatcher experiment would then fall personally on John Major.

Labour's silence on macroeconomics is partly motivated by fear of the financial markets. But I think there is also a more sinister motive: many Labour politicians do not want to believe that a market economy could be made to create and maintain full employment simply by manipulating monetary policy and fiscal policy and exchange rates.

Perhaps socialists simply prefer to believe that achieving prosperity is impossible without root and branch social reform. If so, they should take a look at France and Spain. There they can see the disasters that befall deflationary socialist governments that choose to keep millions in the dole queues, instead of allowing a market economy the oxygen of demand which it needs to prosper and grow.

'Surf' boards on the lookout for shysters in cyberspace

Paul Durman on the fight against the financial villains on the Internet

Cyberspace is the final frontier in the endless war between investment regulators and the financially unscrupulous. The Internet crossed over into the mainstream in 1995, creating an enormous new medium for unscrupulous financial advertising and the promotion of fanciful investment schemes. The Securities and Investments Board, the UK's senior financial watchdog, went online recently and is now surfing for shysters.

As the SIB recognises, the creative anarchy of the Internet and the box-ticking bureaucracy of financial regulation is not a marriage made in heaven. Martin Hollobone, SIB executive officer, says it is "a case of tightly drafted legislation meets cyberspace punks". The Personal Investment Authority, the body responsible for private investors, does not allow investments to be arranged over the Internet because its rules require direct offer advertisements to be made in printed form. So while you can use the "net" to insure your home and its contents

the scheme was investors' use of bulletin boards on the Internet.

Another less ambitious scheme promised "a whopping 20 per cent rate of return" from a "very low risk" investment in cell farming. More successful was the offer of an investment that would double investors' money in four months through the use of the infamous prime bank guarantees — bogus instruments that are held out as a kind of financial rocket fuel. Again, the Internet was used to help the promotion.

From these few brief examples, it is obvious that there is, as yet at least, nothing very innovative about Internet fraud. The unscrupulous are still relying on the conventional buzzwords to attract and reassure investors. Although it can be difficult to discover who is behind a particular e-mail or web site, the SIB says it is hard for those running dubious investment schemes to hide completely. They still need to make contact with their victims. However, the SIB is worried about new services that offer

anonymity for those sending messages over the Internet. Mr Hollobone expects the Internet to place increasing demands on the SIB's resources, though it is clearly not possible to monitor all its output. He is obviously reluctant to reveal the tactics the SIB will use to home in on problem firms. At a very simple level, regulators can seek out potential



The "net" poses unique problems for watchdogs

problems by running various key words through one of the Internet "search engines". WebCrawler, one of the leading search tools, found 47 "hits" on prime bank guarantees. The problems with the Internet may increase as people become more accustomed to buying goods and services online. Although many UK financial services companies are experimenting with their own web-sites, most have stopped short of setting up inter-active facilities — for fear of computer hackers setting out to corrupt company data.

Independent Insurance has been bolder than most. In conjunction with Bervale Mead, the broker, it has set up The Insurance Club on the "net" to offer specially designed cover for home contents, buildings and computers. Independent is confident that its encryption devices protect itself and its customers' credit and details. Mr Hollobone said the SIB does not want to stand in the way of the enthusiasm for opportunities created by the Internet. But he added: "We are very concerned that investors don't treat it as a wonderful new technological development without any problems."

Students can now learn how to cope with stakeholders

Essay contest poses a question of ethics, writes Lindsay Cook



Lindsay Cook and Derek Wanless are pictured with Merlin Wilcox, who won the competition last year

Students are being given the opportunity to experience the problems companies face in trying to balance the needs of different stakeholders when making business decisions. The National Westminster/The Times Business Ethics Essay Competition for undergraduates has set a business conundrum to be solved taking heed of the interests of all the parties.

The problem was set in the autumn long before Tony Blair declared that Labour wanted a stakeholder society. Students are invited to consider what John Smith, chief executive of Food Chain Stores, might do when trying to close a suburban branch. The chain needs to overhaul its operations, get rid of old stores and replace them with larger ones.

The branch serves a large number of low-income families, but would not allow sufficient expansion to increase the number of lines on the shelves and improve profitability. Shareholders will benefit from the savings of closing an unprofitable branch, but Mr Smith has received hundreds of

protest letters from customers and is greeted by protesters and reporters. Staff are unhappy that they may lose their jobs. He has to decide whether to serve the community at the expense of shareholders, or to find another solution. Many bank chief executives

have faced similar decisions when trying to close the last remaining branch in rural areas. NatWest has a code of conduct to guide the actions of all employees. Derek Wanless, chief executive of NatWest Group, said at the time of the launch: "Ethics in business

isn't just about integrity and honesty, it's about the values of the people you work with and the way you balance different stakeholder interests."

Mr Wanless is a judge for the competition, which closes on February 29. The others include Peter Stothard, Editor of *The Times*; Julia Neuberger, chairman of Camden and Islington Community Health Services NHS Trust; John Monks, General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and John Drummond, managing director, Integrity Works.

The judges will select the best six essays, and invite the authors to debate the dilemma with them. From the six, a winner will be selected, who will receive a prize of £3,000, plus a £3,000 award for the university or college. The second and third will receive £2,000 and £1,000 with matching cheques for their colleges. The winning essay will be published in *The Times*.

Entry forms are available from Paul Osgood, NatWest Group, Corporate Affairs Department, 2nd floor, 41 Lothbury, London EC2P 2BP.

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HUNT FOR THE MISSING MILLIONS PART FIVE

How Talbot polished Maxwell's Mirror

Administrator refused to let MGN be bought on the cheap

The £370 million placing of 54 per cent of Mirror Group Newspapers' shares in the autumn of 1993 represented the glittering prize for John Talbot, the senior administrator. Not only had he done battle with the "Maxfactor", but he had emerged victorious from "Mirrorgate".

Talbot always perceived the controlling stake in Mirror Group as the potential jewel in Robert Maxwell's broken crown. In the dark days of December 1991, MGN's share price had been suspended, for the second time, pending clarification of the company's financial position. The initial suspension, following Robert Maxwell's disappearance at sea, had seen the share frozen at 77.5p. The second halt to dealings came at 125p: the price at which Maxwell had floated 49 per cent of MGN's shares the preceding May.

The MGN share stake, controlled by Robert Maxwell Holdings, was initially thought to amount to 51 per cent. This was the belief shared by the outside world and the administrators until the "untouchables" discovered that Maxwell's clandestine share purchases had raised the interest to 54.3 per cent. When the insolvency practitioners originally applied for an administration order over RMH, the court was told that the administrators' ability to hold the MGN share block together and prevent individual banks from selling shares that they held a charge over, could prove highly beneficial to creditors.

If sales of stock reduced the holding below 50.01 per cent, any premium for control would be lost. Talbot recalls: "I controlled the shares, but could not sell them without the consent of the chargeholders or, in extreme circumstances, the court. Equally, the banks could not take possession of the shares and sell them without my consent, or the consent of the court."

Talbot's suggestion to the four banks — NatWest, Midland, Lloyds and Goldman Sachs — was that he should continue to control the shares and work closely with MGN to stabilise the company, while liaising with them. Talbot let it be known that he did not object to the banks taking control of the shares if they acted as a unit, but he would strenuously oppose any attempt to break ranks by way of premature share sales. Talbot points out: "Fortunately, none

of this became necessary because the banks proved extremely supportive. I continued to control the shares and the fragmentation never became an issue."

During the early days, Talbot experienced serious misgivings about MGN's ability to survive. Maxwell Communications Corporation looked destined to follow the private empire into administration (as it did) and it appeared that MGN could easily go the same way. Talks with Ernest Burrington, MGN's recently appointed chairman, and his co-directors, had left Talbot with the impression that the board was still suffering from shock. Maxwell's death and the discovery that approximately half of MGN's pension fund assets of £520 million were missing had taken their toll. Directors consulted lawyers at every turn. As Talbot puts it: "The focus was inward looking."

The financial position of MGN was critical and accountants Ernst & Young had been commissioned to prepare a report for the lending banks that were owed more than £300 million. Talbot urged the banks to support the publishing house, but insists that the lead roles in this drama were played by John Melbourn, of NatWest, and Louis Franks, of Midland. "They persuaded the other lenders to agree to a standstill and ongoing support."

Talbot informed Burrington that, although he did not intend to become a director he did intend to become closely involved in MGN's affairs and that he or his colleague, Bruce Gordon, would like to sit in on board meetings. At the first "sit-in", Talbot noted that the directors were surrounded by a cabal of City advisers and lawyers. The essence of Talbot's message, whispered into Burrington's ear, was "spend more time on strategy, less on analysing the past". Talbot was determined to combat the "inward focus".

To what extent had MGN been damaged? Would more black holes open up? With such questions in the air, MGN was not saleable at this stage, other than at a knock-down price. Talbot was determined not to let a third party snap up MGN on the cheap and duly discovered that the shareholder banks felt much the same way. Talbot reflects: "The media felt somewhat differently. Their focus was on the various parties expressing interest."

Pearson, publisher of the



John Talbot, left, was impressed by David Montgomery, but bankers had to be convinced



the political leaning of the Mirror would not be affected

Financial Times, was the first to throw its hat in the ring. Frank Barlow, Pearson's chief executive, declared that the company was looking at the opportunity of purchasing MGN. Burrington promptly opined that Pearson could "deliver the guarantees of non-interference in editorial which would enable MGN to continue in its present mould". No sooner had Pearson pronounced than Richard Stott, then Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, revealed his plans for a management buyout of MGN, supported by Electra, the venture capital specialists. Come the new year of 1992 and Pearson publicly pulled out. As Talbot dryly remarks: "They announced their decision to withdraw before asking us if the shares were for sale."

Lorho, which then owned *The Observer*, also cast a fleeting glance. Sir Peter Parker, former chairman of British Rail, agreed to head up Stott's MBO. Talbot held talks with Stott's team and emphasised that he did not favour a rapid sale. In order to dampen

speculation, Talbot publicly stated that the controlling block of shares would not be sold in the short term. No sooner had Talbot spoken than Tony O'Reilly, chairman of the Dublin-based Independent Newspapers, let it be known that he was considering a bid for MGN. By the summer of 1992, Burrington had resigned and Sir Robert Clark, MGN's fourth chair-

man in eight months, faced an inevitably stormy AGM. Overall losses, as a by-product of pension fund manipulation, amounted to the thick end of £500 million. During the storm, some shareholders proclaimed that "buckets of white-wash" had been poured over MGN's directors.

As the storm subsided, MGN's shares were thawed after a seven-month freeze. At

50p — massively below 1991's 125p offer for sale price — this placed a value of around £100 million on the jewel that Talbot was patiently polishing. Speculation persisted that a stake was being accumulated and O'Reilly duly emerged as a 2 per cent shareholder.

Both Talbot and advisers NM Rothschild had long taken the view that MGN's management needed to be

strengthened and had initiated a dialogue along these lines with Sir Robert. Earlier in the year, several third parties had approached Talbot with proposals to inject new management, invariably in return for a significant share stake at a relatively insignificant price. Talbot and the banks, it was suggested, would then be at liberty to dispose of their holdings at the higher values

that would result from the go-go achievements of the new management. In Talbot's words: "I did not find these proposals attractive because I could see no reason why we should not implement a similar strategy and obtain all the upside for the benefit of the banks and the creditors."

Such proposals, one of which had come from Hambros, had been rejected. The Hambros proposal, put forward by Anthony Beaver, had involved a management team led by David Montgomery, former Editor of *Today*. Beaver had subsequently informed Talbot that, regardless of the original proposal, Montgomery's team was still interested in becoming involved.

Talbot eventually met Montgomery and was impressed by his strategies. He was also impressed by Montgomery's colleagues, John Allwood, who would fill the vacant slot of finance director, and Murdoch MacLennan, the prospective production director. In line with Talbot's straddling act, a meeting between Montgomery's camp

and the quartet of secured bankers was arranged at Arthur Andersen's offices. Talbot recalls: "One of many issues that the bankers focused on was the political direction of the *Daily Mirror*. The bankers requested assurances that this would not change. These assurances were given and both the bankers and myself were reassured by the presence of Lord Hollick on the incoming team. The political direction of the newspaper was important to myself and the bankers because we believed this was a major commercial benefit to the company. One of the bankers stated categorically that his bank would not be associated with any action that could lead to a change in the political balance of the British press."

A series of meetings was arranged with a view to obtaining support for Montgomery & Co from key MGN directors, but no sooner was this process initiated, than the news leaked. Tremors shook the Labour Party, fearful that the political complexion of the *Daily Mirror* was in danger of

being mud-packed. This, in turn, heightened the risk of internal strife at MGN. The board meeting, to consider the management changes, was brought forward to October 13. It was no secret that Talbot, MGN's controlling shareholder, favoured Montgomery's appointment, but support for the dour Ulsterman was by no means unanimous and the atmosphere during the run-up to the board meeting was tense. Talbot held the ace of trumps. He could, with more than 50 per cent of the votes, threaten to call an EGM and attempt to railroad through Montgomery's appointment. Talbot knew this, as did MGN's directors. In the event, Talbot never played the card, a move that would have fanned internal politics. Talbot much preferred to leave the onus with the directors.

Enter Montgomery, closely followed by Allwood, MacLennan and Lord Hollick, a development that finally put an end to speculation over the possibility of O'Reilly mounting a takeover assault. David Banks succeeded Stott as Editor of the *Daily Mirror*. In Talbot's words: "Montgomery and the bankers were accused by the media of attempting to move the *Daily Mirror* to the right. This was incredibly ironic in view of the banks' perspective and the undertaking given by Montgomery."

Talbot continued to "sit in" with the new management as MGN's recovery strategy was put in place: a strategy punctuated by press reports that Lord Hollick wanted to acquire control of MGN. Lord Hollick finally declared that he could not fully support MGN's management. Talbot reiterated his support for the management and, in March 1993, Lord Hollick bowed out of the boardroom.

MGN's results for 1992 ushered in restructuring provisions of £16.5 million, which saw 1991's pre-tax profit of £47.3 million replaced with a loss of £84 million. But, with operating profits up 16 per cent to £97.5 million, the share price continued to rise to 115p.

Early in September, Talbot revealed that MGN and Maxwell's "private side" companies had finally agreed "substantially" all mutual claims. News of an upsurge in 1993's mid-year pre-tax profits from £15.3 million to close on £70 million provided the platform from which Talbot was able to declare that he was planning a sale of "up to all" his near 53 per cent shareholding.

Support for the issue proved strong enough to allow Rothschild and Cazenove to close their "book building" exercise early. The target striking price of 170p was achieved, which valued the jewel at £373 million. Talbot's timing — with media stocks in vogue — proved impeccable. MGN's current quote: 190p.

Melvyn Marcus, City Editor, will analyse Arthur Andersen's £700 million of realisations in his Saturday column

Melvyn Marcus charts John Talbot's epic sale of Robert Maxwell's 54 per cent stake in MGN

ACCOUNTANCY

The price is right — or else



Lindsay Dodsworth says transfer pricing is a key tax issue

THE headlines that greeted the £200 million transfer pricing adjustment suffered by Glaxo Wellcome at the hands of the Inland Revenue reflect the growth of interest in this area. In a survey of more than 200 multinational companies carried out by Ernst & Young last year, 82 per cent said transfer pricing was the most important international tax issue they face — no other tax area was identified as a major concern by even half of respondents.

A clash between multinationals and governments on this issue was almost inevitable. Governments are keen to improve their balance of payments by attracting lucrative commercial activities to their territory; corporations are concerned with returns to shareholders. Businesses are increasingly organised along operational not national lines, making it difficult to allocate activity — and hence taxable profit — to particular areas.

There has, for years, been a suspicion among tax authorities that multinational companies set transfer prices — at which companies within a group pay each other for goods and services — in order to minimise taxable profits and thus avoid tax.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development was trying to win consensus among member states for a common approach to transfer pricing in 1979. But the US Internal Revenue Service blew apart these efforts by introducing statutory transfer pricing rules in 1986. These rules gave the IRS wide powers to investigate

potential transfer pricing abuses and impose penalties, while companies have to meet documentation and disclosure requirements.

Other countries took the US lead, although most, including the UK, continue to rely on domestic legislation requiring transactions between connected companies to take place at an "arm's-length" price — ie, as if they were independent companies. The OECD has tried to bring about order. The UK authorities have not

been inactive, as Glaxo found. Its case concerned the Revenue's right to go back beyond six years to adjust "open" assessments (where no agreement has been reached on a tax bill) where transfer pricing was not directly under dispute, rather than the technical basis of the adjustment itself. An amendment to the 1996 Finance Bill confirmed the Revenue's power to make such adjustments. And while Kenneth Clarke's Budget pledge to bring transfer pricing

within the self-assessment regime did not appear, it can only be a matter of time, which creates the spectre of a US-style penalties regime. If the taxpayer and authorities cannot agree on the "right" price, if there is such a thing as the "right" transfer price, it is normally deemed to be a so-called "comparable uncontrolled price", which follows the "arm's-length" principle. Such an uncontrolled price is hard to find, and even if available, unlikely to be in the public domain.

Internal transfer pricing may well not even matter to some multinationals. Once-unthinkable whispers are gathering momentum would it not be simpler to split profits between countries that have added value to a transaction using a formula agreed in advance with the tax authorities — the ultimate advance pricing agreement?

Purists and theoreticians will throw up their hands in horror at such a suggestion, but as businesses move from territorial towards purely operational lines, what value do the traditional transaction-based methods of determining profits have? Under the above scenario, a company can get on with making profits and adding value for shareholders without concern for the tax cost. It would also relieve tax authorities of the need to invest resources to police transfer pricing, at a saving to the local exchequer. Surely, this is to the benefit of both governments and taxpayers?

LINDSAY DODSWORTH Corporate Tax Partner at Ernst & Young

Is the tail wagging the dog?

Down in Moorgate Place, the leadership of the English ICA undoubtedly become very depressed with the attitude of journalists. All we seem to chronicle is defeat after defeat for the institute's worthies. The answer, of course, would be for the institute to achieve one or several of its objectives. Sadly, I have again this week to tell of another defeat.

But there is a bit of a silver lining. The English ICA seems to have caught up with the consequences of community action, stakeholding, effective grassroots activism, call it what you will.

The case in point was straightforward and you can see why the institute did not seem at all worried about it. A small practitioner in Liverpool called John Cook read through his regular mailings from the institute. He noticed a mooted change in the education syllabus: a move from the old straightforward system of exam questions to one where choices could be made to allow people to shine at their particular specialisms. The institute was asking him for a response to its proposals. He sent one. He argued that this was moving the exam content from that which provided a common bond through the qualification. He argued this was contrary to the institute's charter.

He received the sort of reply you might expect. He wrote further indignant letters. He was the sort of person the institute would assume had little interest in education plans. "My response," he will tell you, "was listened to only in a public relations sense." It annoyed him. But with membership of almost 110,000, the institute knows it is not going to please everyone. But Cook did not give up.

Last week, having produced the requisite 250 signatures to call a meeting, the issue was put to the vote. And the institute was defeated. No wonder that the insti-

tute's chief executive, Andrew Colquhoun, looking thunderous, sat in silence. With a special mailing to all members, counsel's opinion and two expensive chapmen from Linklaters & Paines at the meeting you are looking at a large amount being spent on having a custard pie placed firmly in your face. The important issue is not that of education and the structure of the exams. It is that members are fighting back effectively. Ac-



ROBERT BRUCE

countancy bodies have always had a rump of grouchy members who would never agree on anything. The difference now is that people are more articulate and effective in their disapproval. The certified accountants found this last year when they were trounced by rebels led by Prem Sikka. The issues then, and last week at the institute, were not technical. They are issues of deep dissatisfaction with the remoteness of power. Cook's real gripe is not the educational

one at all. It is that in 1993 the institute changed its rules to allow the executive more decision-making powers. The arguments then were simple. Life was increasingly complex. Detailed issues should be dealt with by committees guided by a small core. Council could debate and vote on the principles and final decisions. The result, in Cook's view, is that "the executive tail is wagging the council dog far too much". He is an outsider. He has no detailed knowledge of this. But he picks up the signs. "All my letters to the president were passed down to the executive to answer and the president is reduced to a rubber stamp." In the past, none of this would have surprised anyone and the opposition would have got nowhere. But Prem Sikka's effort at the certified accountants has resulted this month in a glossy consultative document to all members. It talks of devolving power, of creating a federal structure, and has a cover depicting Earth viewed from space. It cannot be long before their members are setting up treeshouses in the council chamber in the fight for reform. Equally, the end of last week's meeting at the English ICA produced another perennial rebel, Jeff Wooler, virtually setting up shop to canvass signatures to force a special meeting to make the annual presidential election involve all members. Cook may go for a special meeting to reverse the 1993 changes that enhanced executive power.

At the heart sit the ICA leaders, no longer knowing what anyone wants or how to achieve it. With a members' vote due in June on a merger with CIMA, the management accounting body, this is worrying. The only consolation, as I said, is that they are not alone in finding the traditional methods of wielding power do not seem to work any more.

for 189

Equities close at best of day

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1984 Top 100 Air Carriers				1984 Top 100 Air Carriers			
Rank	Company	Passenger Miles	% Change	Rank	Company	Passenger Miles	% Change
BANKS				DISTRIBUTORS			
3209	2171	1984	309	17	1984	113	42
3210	2172	1984	310	18	1984	114	43
3211	2173	1984	311	19	1984	115	44
3212	2174	1984	312	20	1984	116	45
3213	2175	1984	313	21	1984	117	46
3214	2176	1984	314	22	1984	118	47
3215	2177	1984	315	23	1984	119	48
3216	2178	1984	316	24	1984	120	49
3217	2179	1984	317	25	1984	121	50
3218	2180	1984	318	26	1984	122	51
3219	2181	1984	319	27	1984	123	52
3220	2182	1984	320	28	1984	124	53
3221	2183	1984	321	29	1984	125	54
3222	2184	1984	322	30	1984	126	55
3223	2185	1984	323	31	1984	127	56
3224	2186	1984	324	32	1984	128	57
3225	2187	1984	325	33	1984	129	58
3226	2188	1984	326	34	1984	130	59
3227	2189	1984	327	35	1984	131	60
3228	2190	1984	328	36	1984	132	61
3229	2191	1984	329	37	1984	133	62
3230	2192	1984	330	38	1984	134	63
3231	2193	1984	331	39	1984	135	64
3232	2194	1984	332	40	1984	136	65
3233	2195	1984	333	41	1984	137	66
3234	2196	1984	334	42	1984	138	67
3235	2197	1984	335	43	1984	139	68
3236	2198	1984	336	44	1984	140	69
3237	2199	1984	337	45	1984	141	70
3238	2200	1984	338	46	1984	142	71
3239	2201	1984	339	47	1984	143	72
3240	2202	1984	340	48	1984	144	73
3241	2203	1984	341	49	1984	145	74
3242	2204	1984	342	50	1984	146	75
3243	2205	1984	343	51	1984	147	76
3244	2206	1984	344	52	1984	148	77
3245	2207	1984	345	53	1984	149	78
3246	2208	1984	346	54	1984	150	79
3247	2209	1984	347	55	1984	151	80
3248	2210	1984	348	56	1984	152	81
3249	2211	1984	349	57	1984	153	82
3250	2212	1984	350	58	1984	154	83
3251	2213	1984	351	59	1984	155	84
3252	2214	1984	352	60	1984	156	85
3253	2215	1984	353	61	1984	157	86
3254	2216	1984	354	62	1984	158	87
3255	2217	1984	355	63	1984	159	88
3256	2218	1984	356	64	1984	160	89
3257	2219	1984	357	65	1984	161	90
3258	2220	1984	358	66	1984	162	91
3259	2221	1984	359	67	1984	163	92
3260	2222	1984	360	68	1984	164	93
3261	2223	1984	361	69	1984	165	94</

Equities close

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the previous day's close, but adjustments are made to reflect price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

NYSE				NASDAQ			
High	Low	Company	Price	High	Low	Company	Price
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (A)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (B)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (C)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (D)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (E)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (F)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (G)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (H)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (I)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (J)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (K)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (L)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (M)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (N)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (O)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (P)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (Q)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (R)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (S)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (T)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (U)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (V)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (W)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (X)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (Y)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (Z)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AA)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AB)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AC)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AD)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AE)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AF)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AG)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AH)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AI)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AJ)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AK)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AL)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AM)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AN)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AO)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AP)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AQ)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AR)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AS)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AT)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AU)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AV)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AW)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AX)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AY)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (AZ)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112
24	23 1/2	Am. Int'l. (BA)	21	75	74 1/2	112	112

ENGINEERING JEWELRY

FOOD MANUFACTURERS

HOUSEHOLD GOODS

INSURANCE

INVESTMENT TRUSTS

SHORTS (under 5 years)

MEDIUMS (5 to 15 years)

SHORTS (over 15 years)

MEDIUMS (15 to 30 years)

LONGS (30 to 50 years)

VERY LONGS (50 to 100 years)

VERY LONGS (100 to 200 years)

VERY LONGS (200 to 500 years)

VERY LONGS (500 to 1000 years)

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Business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the day when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and

PR	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	Yield	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	%	Yield
62-	72	69	Manly Eng Int	62	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	62	1	1.7	12
63	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
64	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
65	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
66	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
67	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
68	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
69	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
70	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
71	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
72	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
73	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
74	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
75	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
76	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
77	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
78	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
79	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
80	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
81	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
82	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
83	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
84	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
85	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
86	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
87	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
88	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
89	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
90	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
91	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
92	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
93	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
94	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
95	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
96	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
97	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
98	68	66	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12	345	345	Manly Eng Int	68	1	1.7	12
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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are undernourished has declined from 1.1 billion to 800 million. The number of people who are malnourished has declined from 1.5 billion to 1 billion. The number of people who are obese has increased from 100 million to 300 million. The number of people who are overweight has increased from 100 million to 300 million. The number of people who are obese and overweight has increased from 100 million to 300 million. The number of people who are obese and overweight has increased from 100 million to 300 million.

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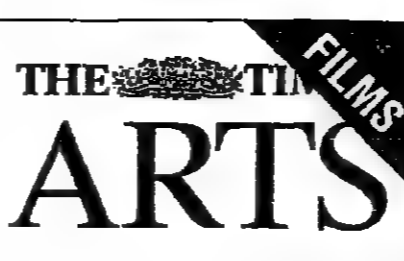
FILM 1

Al Pacino is the cop hunting down Robert De Niro in the tense and atmospheric thriller, *Heat*



FILM 2

Pedro Almodóvar rediscovers his touch, and finds a new maturity, in *The Flower of my Secret*



FILM 3

Sabrina proves a remake too far for Sydney Pollack, and Harrison Ford is no modern-day Bogart



FILM 4

Whitney Houston's latest is *Waiting to Exhale*, a great soundtrack with a minor movie attached

Heavyweight champs win in a knockout

CINEMA: De Niro and Pacino turn up the *Heat*, and Geoff Brown gets blown away; plus the other new releases

Surveying the aftermath of one more robbery in Los Angeles, Al Pacino's workaholic detective admits: "They're good." Of course they're good: their boss is Robert De Niro, an actor who, in this film at least, never wastes a gesture, and keeps you riveted by his eyes alone. The film is *Heat*. It lasts nearly three hours. Writer and director Michael Mann needs the space, not so much to bombard us with action, but to draw us into the characters as they play games of cat and mouse, trust and betrayal, in a lonely city of night and neon. A lesser director would fling his two stars together, like fighting cocks, as soon as the credits roll. Mann, bouncing back after the absurd melange of *The Last of the Mohicans*, keeps them separate, exploring their private circumstances. Pacino's life is chaotic. De Niro's a void. Pacino's third marriage fragments as his wife is squeezed out by his work and the tension needed to keep him "sharp, on the edge". De Niro prides himself on having no ties, until he meets a budding graphic designer (Amy Brennemann) who finds strength in his silence.

At times the alternation between personal lives becomes over-schematic. Occasionally the dialogue grates. Pacino's wife (Diane Venora) does not talk, she gives speeches: she even utters the word "detriment". But blemishes are forgotten as Mann burrows deep into the human consequences of crime on both sides of the law, and Dante Spinoza's camera prowls round the landscape of restaurants, deserted drive-ins, banks and hotels.

When the stars finally share a scene, their first ever in a movie, the tone is low-key, almost comic. They chat in a coffee-shop. They talk about dreams. "So you never wanted a regular-type life?" Pacino asks. Like hunter and prey in westerns and war dramas, both sides show respect. Both sides also know what fate and duty have in store.

Stripped to its bones, *Heat* may sound trite. But Mann puts so much flesh on his characters that you never feel hungry. Aside from Pacino and De Niro, the side dishes are equally tasty. As De Niro's henchmen and associates, Val Kilmer, Jon Voight and Tom Sizemore all make their mark.

Heat
Warner West End
15, 170 mins
Excellent crime drama with De Niro and Pacino

The Flower of my Secret
Curzon Mayfair
15, 110 mins
Pedro Almodóvar grows up

Sabrina
Empire, PG, 127 mins
Antique Cinderella story

Waiting to Exhale
Warner West End
15, 123 mins
Unsubtle drama of female camaraderie

The Innocent
Sleep
MGM Haymarket
15, 99 mins
Creaky British thriller

Madagascar Skin
ICA Cinema, 93 mins
Very artistic, very infuriating

The Most Desired Man
MGM Swiss Centre
18, 98 mins
German comedy about sexual identity

Not for *Heat* the identikit crooks of most Hollywood movies.

And when action is called for, Mann certainly delivers the goods. Even the most jaded eyes should blink as De Niro's team robs a bank, only to lose lives and booty in a nerve-racking shootout on the street. Just when it looked as though the crime genre might atrophy into cold pastiche, *Heat* applies the heat. After the grueling misogyny and slapdash plotting of *Kika*, you may be forgiven for flinching from another film by Pedro Almodóvar. But *The Flower of my Secret* proves that you should never cast a director into darkness forever. Not that the Spanish iconoclast has abandoned his zany tricks or his fashion sense. Though the tones may be muted, every dress, bead and wall still contribute to a unique colour symphony. The disorientated heroine, on the surface another of Almodóvar's women on the verge of a nervous breakdown, favours

strong primary colours: blues and reds. The walls might be peach, or some pastel shade. Room is found, too, for bizarre diversions: a screaming session to help doctors secure organs for transplant. But at the film's heart—and it has one—is the condition of Leo (subtly portrayed by Marisa Paredes), an authoress of escapist trash. Her first problem is physical: she cannot pull off her boots. Then her fiction turns dark and twisted: her marriage to an absent husband, serving with Nato, reaches a crisis, and the support systems of family and friends are failing. Almodóvar gently explores her isolation, savouring the paradoxes of life, allowing comedy when required: a welcoming, tender sentiment, too, especially when the heroine returns to her village roots for sustenance from Mother Earth.

In place of the usual gaudy caricatures, Almodóvar's main characters almost appear to be real people and, as Leo and her new-found male friend, a roly-poly publisher, blend minds, hearts and, in some senses, genders, our own hearts are warmed. Almodóvar still has his fun in *The Flower of my Secret*, but he is no longer just a child thumbing his nose at the world.

The writers were treading on thin ice in *Sabrina* when they let Harrison Ford's businessman tell Julia Ormond, the chauffeur's daughter, "It's the Nineties, Sabrina." It is patently not: the Cinderella romance that furnished Billy Wilder with his film of the same name refuses to suit the times. Even 40 years ago the material was none too sparkling, though Audrey Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart and William Holden made it appear so. The present cast are in no position to manufacture fizz. Ford is dull, ice-cold. Some of the chill may suit the character — a bachelor in a midlife crisis — but surely he should demonstrate a twinge of feeling as Sabrina enters his heart. Ormond has no allure either. Whatever spark she showed in *First Knight* has been snuffed out by the glamour machine. The director is Sydney Pollack (see interview right); watching this lumbering dinosaur you wonder how he ever made *Tootsie*, one of the best modern comedies. If no audience exists for *Sabrina*, *Waiting to Exhale* has one alone panicking at the door. They are young, female and identify easily with the film's black women, whose lives are devoted to talking about sex, having it, and visiting the beauty parlour. The film, based on Terry McMillan's novel, no doubt began with higher ambitions

than magazine fiction to be read under a hairdrier; but its development is so bald and the colours so glossy that magazine fiction is the result. The actor Forest Whitaker directed, although the names that matter are Angela Bassett, who gives the only meaty performance, and singer Whitney Houston, whose presence almost turns the film into a soundtrack CD with pictures.

The *Innocent Sleep*, a British film, self-financed by 27-year-old director Scott Mitchell and his team, makes you wonder how fresh young heads can harbour such stale ideas. Little is original in this story about the hunt for an innocent witness to murder. Michael Gambon, the leering heavy, took his performance down from the shelf, dust included. Annabella Sciorra's chain-smoking, bally reporter is another unhappy cliché. Any novelty arises from Rupert Graves, usually found draped round a sofa in some Merchant-Ivory film. Now he lives in Cardboard City, and stumbles round barely distinguishable from the London fog and rubble.

Still, you cannot help admiring the movie for not giving in to script fatigue. Mitchell, whose last film experience was driving Elizabeth Hurley to work for *Beyond Bedlam*, shows undoubted talent, and generates a few sparks from hackneyed situations. But next time, chaps, don't waste your time reviving a corpse. John Hannah, wasted in *The Innocent Sleep* as a bantering colleague of Sciorra, also appears in Chris Newby's infuriating *Madagascar Skin*. Newby is a master designer of curious and lyrical images: *Anchorella* and his shorts prove that. But dramatic momentum is not his line, least of all in this whimsical tidbit commissioned by the British Film Institute. Two characters meet on a deserted beach. Hannah, haunted and tentative, has a facial birthmark shaped like Madagascar. Bernard Hill, a breezy rascal, is buried up to his neck in the sand. Moves are made toward a gay relationship, but instead of nurturing his characters Newby lets them fend for themselves among the cryptic imagery. The film, you soon realise, could stop at any time, or last forever.

Sönke Wortmann's *The Most Desired Man*, a local hit in Germany 18 months ago, barrels along pleasantly enough with a story culled from two gay comic books. Not that the film is pitched at homosexual audiences: the plight of Til Schweiger's heterosexual hero, who shelters from his girlfriend's wrath in the apartment of a gay acquaintance, is played for broad, general comedy. Hollywood has shown interest in a remake, so beware.

Making Cinderella less Wilder

When Sydney Pollack remade *Sabrina*, a lot of ghosts got in the way, he tells David Robinson

Even though he had a great time directing it, *Sabrina* is both the first and last remake Sydney Pollack intends to undertake. "I anticipated, of course, that the press would make comparisons with the original, but I didn't realise it would be so impossible for the film to be judged independently," he says. "Even some reviewers who really love the movie feel obliged to qualify their praise with 'Dare I say it, but...'"

"The *New York Times* said it was a kamikaze undertaking, but that the film ran so hard over the Billy Wilder version that it ran right through and made it to the other side. "Tough as remakes are, though, I feel that *Sabrina* has marvelous mythical story elements that bear telling over and over. It is enough of a fairytale to be told in many different ways, and I wanted to make it in a Nineties way, just as the original movie belonged to its own era, the last years of Hollywood innocence."

"I actually refused, the first two or three times Paramount talked about doing it. I didn't want to do a remake and I sure as hell didn't want to do a remake of a Wilder film. But then Harrison Ford, whom I admire and who was attached to the project, asked me to look at the old movie again."

"Sometimes when you start to analyse the problems in a screenplay you get hooked on finding the solution; and that's what got me involved in this case. I realised that Humphrey Bogart was the least explored character in the original film and the most contemporary. I felt that Harrison could make something of the role if it was properly written for him."

to be intimidated by the original. "It's got a life of its own," he said. "You make your own version." He came to New York to work with us. His energy was phenomenal. By the end of the day David Rayfield and I would be exhausted and he was still thinking up new scenes. He would propose changes so wild that they shocked me. We didn't use many of his suggestions, but he stimulated us tremendously.

"He came to the premiere and was just touched as hell. He loved it because it was a completely fresh approach. He calls quite often to ask how the

film is doing, and is even thinking about turning it into a musical." Wilder's own approach seems also to have been encouraging, if more guarded than the writer's. "Of course I called him before agreeing to do it," Pollack says. "I wouldn't have done it without his blessing. I sent him the script and spent a long afternoon chatting with him. We talked a lot about the problems of updating the story, what works today and what doesn't. We didn't talk in page-by-page terms, but in a philosophical way."

"I spent the whole day with him when we showed him the film. It wasn't easy for either of us, but he was wonderful, very encouraging, very easy. He understood what I was trying to do. When he saw the picture he was very generous about it. He said, 'This is hard for me and for you. You'll see one day, when someone will try to remake *The Way We Were*. You'll not find it an easy thing to watch.' But he said: 'It's good, pretty good.' From Wilder that was big praise."

"I didn't want to make a Billy Wilder film, and I couldn't. He has a special, amazing genius — acid wit, irony and a unique sense of drama. I didn't want to try to compete with Wilder and I didn't want my actors to have to compete with Audrey Hepburn and Bogart. I wanted to make a different movie; and I think we've done that."

ALAN WELLS



Sydney Pollack, director of *Sabrina*: "I got interested in the idea of a film that would be indebted to the spirit of Fifties romantic comedies, but have a Nineties edge to it"



Marisa Paredes as the woman on the edge of a nervous breakdown in Almodóvar's *The Flower of my Secret*

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■ MUSIC

Michael Tilson Thomas flourishes in San Francisco, but American orchestras struggle elsewhere

■ THEATRE 1

A new play, *The Night of the Fox*, goes nowhere slowly trying to define rape

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ THEATRE 2

... while *Paper Walls* deals, more fruitfully, with abuse and murder inside the family home

■ OPERA

David Pountney makes a beautiful triumph of *Aida* in Munich, but the musical side is less impressive

Five go in search of their former glory

Traditionally, the American orchestral scene was dominated by the Big Five — Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York and Philadelphia — surrounded by a great mass of what the East Coast establishment snuffily referred to as the regional orchestras, which were constantly jockeying for position in the second rank. By 1990, during the waning days of the directorships of Sir Georg Solti in Chicago and Zubin Mehta in New York, it was widely believed that those two orchestras, at least, had been eclipsed by some of the young upstarts, notably the St Louis Symphony under Leonard Slatkin, the orchestras of Los Angeles and San Francisco, and, if one roamed a bit northward, Montreal.

America's top orchestras are in danger of losing their lustre, says Jamie James

rington, Oliver Knussen, Joan Rodgers, Evelyn Glennie, and ondes martenot player Cynthia Millar.

Slatkin, who built the St Louis Symphony into an orchestra of international stature (or so we are continually told) will replace Mstislav Rostropovich as director of the National Symphony Orchestra, in Washington, DC. Rostropovich attempted to bring the capital's orchestra into the front rank, and did not quite succeed. Perhaps Slatkin, whose organisational prowess is acknowledged as masterly even by those who find his conducting rather bland, will fare better in the city of bureaucrats.

The Orchestras Formerly Known as the Big Five are not in particularly brilliant shape today, compared with their glory days under the likes of Bernstein, Ormandy and Szell, yet neither are any of them in dire straits — with the possible exception of Chicago, where Daniel Barenboim's lordly airs and inconsistent conducting appear to be driving many (though not all) of the players to distraction.

Things have quietened down a bit since he took over in 1991, when he was regularly excoriated by critics and members of the orchestra, but there are still persistent reports of low morale in the orchestra. Orchestra Hall is now undergoing a \$100 million acoustical renovation, although a recent concert performance of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* conducted by Solti sounded warm and glorious to these ears. Nonetheless, the CSO's executive director, Henry Vogel, claims to have the highest subscription rate of any orchestra in America.

The Cleveland Orchestra is probably the country's leading symphonic ensemble today. Christoph von Dohnányi has made a number of key personnel changes, including a new concertmaster, William Preucil, and new principals for the second violins, double basses and horns. In the spring, the orchestra will embark on a European tour, which begins in London. On March 21, Dohnányi will conduct a programme of Schumann, Stravinsky and Ligeti at the Festival Hall.

When Kurt Masur took over as music director at the New York Philharmonic five years ago, he was hailed as a saviour, restoring the orchestra to its former glory after the near-shambles left behind by Zubin Mehta, who was never a favourite with the players. While the situation in New York is stable, and the orchestra continues to play well, some cracks are beginning to show. Masur's courtly, rather drollish podium presence has failed to endear him to a city that loves stars as much as Hollywood does, and the current season has not been an inspired one. When they have attempted to introduce a bit of pizzazz, the results have been something of an embarrassment, such as a concert in October of film scores conducted by John Mauceri, which featured film clips from *Ben-Hur* and the Errol Flynn *Robin Hood*.

The Boston Symphony seems to be in a solid position at the moment, though this is not one of its great periods. Seiji Ozawa has held the top post there since 1973, making him by far the most senior of major American music directors. At the age of 60, he has reached, and perhaps passed, the point at which he must decide whether to look around for a new orchestra (but where?) or to stay in Boston and reap the benefits of his quarter-century association with the ensemble.

Philadelphia was thrown into an uproar three years ago when Riccardo Muti abruptly resigned as music director. When Wolfgang Sawallisch was chosen as his replacement, he was widely viewed as an interim, transitional figure. However, since he took over in 1993, he has made a much deeper impact than had been expected. The orchestra has rallied round him, though attendance has declined appreciably.



Michael Tilson Thomas, here conducting at a Miami gala, has revitalised the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra

nobody in Philadelphia seems to have a clue as to who will succeed him. In the great mass of the second tier, the news is mostly gloomy. The death throes of the National Endowment for the Arts (America's equivalent to the Arts Council) is probably just a matter of time: a state of controlled panic has overtaken those institutions which do not have loyal, entrenched patrons and audiences. The Detroit Symphony, led by Neeme Järvi, recently received an endowment grant of \$80 million from a consortium of philanthropists, but he is now 72 years old, and

among those less fortunate, the chilling arts climate has produced some very strange programming and gimmicks. In Houston, for example, where Christoph Eschenbach continues to inspire excellent playing in the core German repertoire, the orchestra has resorted to backing up pop performers. Even in conservative Philadelphia there are plans to install large screens in the hall to project close-ups of the musicians.

The height of absurdity may have been reached by the Oregon Symphony, under music director James De Priest, which has scheduled a marathon concert cum murder mystery called *Mozart till Midnight*. The programme plays upon the premise of Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* by including music by "composers contemporary with Mozart who hated him and might have wanted to kill him". Computer terminals are installed in the foyer of the hall which permit members of the audience to vote for culprits and also to communicate with the maestro, who apparently has nothing better to do in the interval than sit typing at a computer keyboard.

■ CONCERT

Funky feast in a tin

FROM anarchic beginnings a decade ago, New York's Bang on a Can Festival has gained respectability in the contemporary music world. First came a move from its base in Lower Manhattan to the Lincoln Center, then a recording contract with Sony for the festival's resident ensemble, the Bang on a Can All-Stars. Now the All-Stars tour widely, and on Tuesday they were warmly received at the South Bank for the second time in six months.

Bang on a Can was created by Michael Gordon, David Lang and Julia Wolfe for composers, including themselves, too strange to fit into New York's polarised uptown-downtown music scene. Hardly any two pieces the All-Stars play are alike, but almost all combine elements of "classical" and rock music. Appropriately, the playing of this image-conscious sextet — cello,

bass, saxophone, guitar, piano, percussion — mixes the precision of a chamber group with the punch of a rock group.

Much of the Bang on a Can repertoire inhabits an aggressive minimalist world, but unlike the kind of simplified Muzak which has crept into the concert hall, these works have something to say. Lang's *Cheating, Lying, Stealing* was dark and disreputable; menacing high cello lines soared through a barrage of percussive effects in the central section of a tightly structured work.

Its score carries the marking "ominous funk", and funk was also an inspiration behind the impatiently energetic piece that followed, Wolfe's *Lick*. Both *Lick* and Steve Marland's throbbing *Horses of Instruction* — a Blake title not explained — seemed numbingly repetitive and might have made more impact if they had been shorter.

The significance of the title in Louis Andriessen's *Hout* ("Wood") was also unclear, as the tightly-packed piece swirled with colour and energy like a Chinese dragon. No less virtuosity was required for an arrangement of the Brazilian jazz musician Hermeto Pascoal's *Arapuca* ("Bumblebee"), and the players dispatched it with joy and Latin vigour.

Different moods were explored in Martin Bresnick's *The Bucker Rider*, an austere, desolate piece inspired by Kafka's short story, and one of the composer's "Opere della musica povera". Most striking of all was Gordon's *Industry*, a cello solo based on the simplest of materials: a mournful lament gradually amplified into distorted electronic wailing. Maya Beiser played it with grinding intensity. Unusually for a QEH concert, the encore was by Kurt Cobain.

JOHN ALLISON

THEATRE: In a suburban dream home, abuse and outrage fester in flimsy disguise. Plus, a moral hunt that cannot find its prey

Unsafe as houses

Scarlet Theatre's surreal playlet opens just outside a structure that looks a bit like a Wendy house and a bit like a bathing hut and is clearly meant to denote flimsiness, vulnerability and claustrophobia-inducing confinement. For a few minutes three women simply come and go, glassy grins fixed on their faces. But then a finger starts drawing on the tiny window below the toyshop eaves. "Please help," it writes.

Paper Walls Purcell Room

Is this an Ayckbourian cry for help from a parody suburban home? Is Scarlet Theatre demonstrating the awfulness of the ordinary? When Grainne Byrne, Christine Entwistle and Jan Pearson are trooping off to the DIY shop in uniform red jackets, or trying to repair the roof of their funny little house without sliding off, it might seem so. But Alice Power and Alice Purcell, the joint director-designers, have



Dread: Jan Pearson, Grainne Byrne, Christine Entwistle

something stronger in mind. The exaggeratedly ordinary is definitely ordinary in the North; but you would hardly guess so from the company's style, which relies mainly on dumbshow and eschews specific accusation for a general evocation of stress and silent suffering. That is the evening's limitation, but also its strength. If it were surrounded by loads of verbiage, you might not feel the danger inherent in an event as tiny as the dropping of the master-of-the-house's boiled egg.

What the company successfully catches is the dread it is safest to conceal, the pretence of normality that has to be sustained by means of smiles, desperate jokes, anything. Certainly, the evening provides the definitive answer to those who still suspect the London Mime Festival of being an excuse for fee figures in body-stockings to do clever tree imitations. *Paper Walls* is as deft as it should be: but it carries a punch too.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

Superficial wounds

Randy has just been released from the slammer. He was sent down seven years ago, found guilty of raping a girl at her 14th birthday party. This new play by Peter Briffa opens with Randy's former Oxford University pals nervously awaiting his arrival. They gather on the patio of the respectably acried farm inherited by Shona, once a bit of a goer but long since settled with Nigel, student revolutionary turned gentleman farmer.

The Night of the Fox Lilian Baylis, NI

gun, to hunt down the local hen-snatching fox, of course. Briffa's drama should be provocative. Randy's visit essentially sparks an angry row about definitions of rape. Only it is hardly a debate. Randy delivers his radical "anti-feminist" arguments in large slabs. His logic, moreover, is crudely muddled. We are told this man has been clocking up first-class degrees. Standards must be slipping. Generally, the characters' conversations are banal or corny. Sometimes this is clearly intended to be satirical, but nobody seems sure when the writing is switching between farce and seriousness.

"We are no longer prepared to tolerate that sort of behaviour," But Sam Shammas's poorly directed cast are awkwardly static and un-paced. Some drag their feet, while Barry Cooper (here in his second Shammas production) hurriedly blunders through Randy's speeches. Vivien Gregory gives a commendably relaxed performance as the pregnant Shona, but everybody else's nerves are superficially portrayed.

The play attempts to depict people with split attitudes. Randy keeps saying he is guilty and sorry, then proclaiming his innocence and being unbelievably insensitive. Perhaps he is a psychopath but Cooper conveys no sense of mania or menace, so his schizophrenic statements are merely confusing. The implication that Lucy and Helen, while rejecting Randy's crass advances, might secretly want to fall into his arms is even harder to swallow.

KATE BASSETT

PREJUDICE, we are taught, is the one thing critics are not supposed to harbour. (Pride, it goes without saying, is unknown to the breed.) But it was difficult to cross the threshold of the Bavarian State Opera last week without the odd nervous twitch. David Pountney's anarchic sense of humour has been much in evidence recently, and not only in his rumbustious *Fairy Queen* for ENO. Travellers' tales from Bregenz last year spoke of drum-majorettes in, of all operas, *Fidelio*. What would he do with *Aida*?

Abstract but absorbing night by the Nile

In the event the Pountney *Aida* was sober, deadly serious and very, very beautiful — surely one of the finest achievements of a director who seldom fails to surprise. It also made a useful point in the on-going argument as to whether people who stage opera should

be called "directors" or "producers". This was definitely Pountney-as-producer. It was the overall concept that gripped the imagination rather than the actual direction of singers, which was rather conventional — the stock, but restrained operatic gestures of tradition which you could argue, were what Verdi had in mind when he wrote the music at a time before opera production as such was invented.

But the abstract visual world in which it all happened was something quite extraordinary. Robert Israel's decor suggested a scenery store: half a dozen huge flats, a pair of trucks, with faint depictions of human, detectably female anatomy (a

navel, a neck — Pountney sees the opera as a study of two kinds of woman, the fleshly and the spiritual), all shifted slowly, continuously, noiselessly by an army of supernumeraries.

If that sounds unpromising, it is failing to take into account the work of the American lighting designer Mimi Jordan Sherin — she, really, should be designated the director. Washes of light in the most delicate colours (violet and indigo especially lovely) painted an ever-changing dream-world of quite astounding painterly beauty. The final image of a huge rock slowly descending to crush the lovers who were descending into the bowels of the theatre was breathtaking.

The near-abstract sculpture of the Nile scene was equally impressive, and if there is an episode that could be rethought — and this is a staging one longs to see developed rather than just left to get on with it — it is the Triumph scene, to which just six dancers and nondescript choreography (Nils Christie) failed to grant due weight. But this is already one of the most striking *Aidas* you could hope to see.

But not, yet, one of the most striking you could hope to hear. Roberto Abbado's conducting was workaday, efficient, not measuring up to one of Verdi's most subtle and elusive scores. He, and the house, favour a big fat sound that is not exactly singer-friendly, and this neo-classical opera is largely about singing. As Pountney tacitly acknowledged, Influencia, I understand, had cut a swathe through the rehearsal period, and the first night was a nervy occasion, with only Waltraud Meier (Amneris) sounding fully

at ease. She sang an absolute storm, sounding happier in Verdi than she often does in Wagner.

After a tense, edgy first two acts, Cheryl Studer settled down into a sunnier, more relaxed account of *Aida*'s music, but the silvery sense of musical phrase for which she is so much admired was in evidence throughout. Dennis O'Neill was the dependable Radames, and Robert Hale a fine Amonasro. He seems to sound better in this theatre than anywhere else. Only Kurt Rydl's relentlessly fortissimo, woodenly phrased Ramfis let the side down. Yet even if no one had sung a note all evening (I exaggerate, of course) this would still have been an *Aida* worth seeing.

RODNEY MILNES

Brought down early by the Romantic disease



When Rosa's *Scene of Witchcraft* (1646) was painted in Florence, ecclesiastic attitudes there — despite the Inquisition — were more relaxed than in Rome, where it could not have been openly displayed

Salvator Rosa may have been the first performance artist, for his public image seemed to matter as much if not more than his paintings. A poetaster and would-be scholar, he paraded the streets of Rome in his finest clothes while a liveried servant followed carrying his sword, and his satire and comedies were noted by his contemporaries. He affected a Stoic pose, portraying himself as an austere scholar in the famous self-portrait in the National Gallery; yet Rosa always watched the art market and pined for official recognition. Both contemporaries and posterity recognised his special gift for landscapes — something born of his early training in open-air sketching — but Rosa emphasised the discordant features of nature: the jagged rocks and broken limbs of trees, filling his scenes with witches and bandits rather than nymphs and shepherds. Eventually the success of his landscapes irritated him, and when one hapless visitor asked to see them, Rosa

Bruce Boucher

SALVATOR ROSA
His Life and Times
By Jonathan Scott
Yale University Press, £40

testily replied: "My talent is for figures, and I make sure they're seen by people of excellent taste to get rid of this absurd idea that I paint landscapes."

Rosa's paintings were picturesque *avant la lettre*, and his fierce independence won a special esteem in the 18th century. Legends grew up about his spurious activities as a cutpurse and revolutionary, and if this was not quite the fame Rosa would have wanted, at least it was consonant with the role-playing so evident in his self-portraits. Here the comparison with Rembrandt or Poussin is striking, for Rosa evinced little interest in plumbing spiritual depths so much as indulging in that quintessential Italian pastime of *bella figura*.

Jonathan Scott unapologetically calls his study of Rosa an old-fashioned "life and times", but its author could hardly be called a traditional art-historian. As a merchant banker and the current chairman of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, Scott clearly has the right background for dealing with a rum cove like Rosa.

The book is especially interesting on Rosa's literary efforts and friendships with scholars. Scott has even translated Rosa's poetry into colloquial blank verse — no mean achievement. His work is sound and crammed with factual information. The book comes to life in the later chapters, surveying the remarkable late paintings such as *Dream of Aeneas* and *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, or the etchings which crowned the artist's last years. Although Rosa saw etchings as a means of advertising his pictures, they suited his wispy figural style, and with them he created a graphic equivalent to Titian's late poetry.

He imbibed life as he did opium

Peter Ackroyd on the restless genius of *Kubla Khan*

Never saw his likeness. Charles Lamb wrote of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "nor probably the world can see again." They had met at Christ's Hospital. No doubt Coleridge wore the blue coat with a difference, since his ebullient and elusive character had been largely formed. He was already a great talker and a voracious reader, with the gift of enrapturing all those whom he encountered. It is not necessary to expatiate on the delights and difficulties of his childhood, therefore, since they remain present throughout the rest of his life. It is best to encounter him in full flood.

His career at Cambridge, and his brief role as an enlisted soldier under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbach, are well enough known. He was discharged as "insane", and in that sense he was already the perfect young man. He was so in love with his feelings that he was able effortlessly to parody them, perpetually tumbling between laughter and despair as if he were not at all sure of his own destiny.

Much more than Byron or Shelley, in fact, he is the poet of adolescence: despite what might be called his pantheistic Unitarianism, he saw nothing in the wide universe except the trembling of his own sensitivity. Only Wordsworth was more self-obsessed. And then, at 22, as Rosemary Ashton writes in this detailed biography, "Coleridge comes of age as a poet."

He came of age as a talker, too, and it is not surprising that some of his best poetry takes the form of heightened conversation. But talk can also be a kind of oral fixation — what Coleridge himself once described as the "sucking child" — and the bibulousness of infantile nature is present in his achievements as well as in his addictions. On one side are the *Conversation Poems*, and on the other the intense and insistent verse of *Kubla Khan* or *The Ancient Mariner*. It is also the difference between the drink and the opium which he imbibed constantly.

He was so busy becoming addicted to literature and life, in fact, that he could never settle to anything. He veered between Jacobinism and Unitarianism. Pantisocratic enterprises and provincial lecturing. He took up poetry, criticism, philosophy and journalism only to abandon them. It is very surprising that he actually managed to marry, but the omens were not good when he named his first child Hartley, after the philosopher of sensationalism. His poor family were forced to follow the caravan of his own diastory and desultory nature — until, that is, he decided that he ought to travel alone. He was in Germany, and then in Malta: he was always the searcher, although it is never clear what precisely he was searching for.

He was not meant to be a husband or a father. He was too vague and too undependable for anything but brief and ecstatic friendships. The fervid cycle of rapture and eventual disenchantment is seen to its strongest effect, of course, in his relationship with Wordsworth. Wordsworth was for a while infatuated by Coleridge's loquacity and knowledge.



Coleridge: the poet of adolescence

THE LIFE OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE
By Rosemary Ashton
Blackwell, £25

while Coleridge was mightily impressed by the other poet's understanding. It could have been a fine match if Coleridge had remained in London, where the rapid beat of the city marched his own tumultuous sensitivity, but to be alone with Wordsworth in the country was a mistake.

He was so oppressed by the other poet's genius that he quite forgot about his own. He came to think of himself as a "metaphysician" rather than as a poet. He never possessed that solid, self-sustaining vision upon which Wordsworth could draw. Coleridge was too quick, and he knew too much. He was too clever to be a poet, and too imaginative to be a metaphysician. So, like Muhammad's tomb, he was suspended between two

worlds. And what, then, was the result? Thirty years of apprenticeship, as Rosemary Ashton sees it, with the next 30 as "his years of wandering."

This is in many respects a detached and restrained biography; it does not have the imaginative fervour, for example, of Richard Holmes's wonderful *Coleridge: Early Visions*. But it is described as a critical biography and, since Rosemary Ashton has written previously on *Lewes* and on *Elliot*, she is thoroughly conversant with those pulses of German idealism which animated Coleridge and which briefly stirred the English critical spirit. But she is a very astute observer of Coleridge's life. She is also, on occasions, objective to the point of being censorious. Of course it is not hard to be unsympathetic about various aspects of his behaviour, not least in his treatment of those closest to him, and yet perhaps it is necessary to be half in love with him in order properly to understand him.

Certain people seem born to be the object of other people's gossip and pity, and it could be said that Coleridge was created by the needs of others as well as by his own. He was always there, for contemporaries of lesser genius, to criticise, to direct and attempt to control. With his inordinate desire to please and to entertain, he pretended to capitulate. In the end he always managed to escape, while making an almost pantomimic show of self-doubt and self-criticism.

Yet perhaps the expectations of others were quite wrong. His letters and notebooks are wonderful, and there is a sense in which his unfinished works form a greater achievement than that of any of his contemporaries. We must think of a writer who is perhaps at his best when he remains incomplete; his genius and imagination are so restless that they can only be brought into play momentarily. Richard Holmes put it well when he described one of Coleridge's most haunting images as "a protean form or a force-field, lacking fixed structure or outline."

This is also the shape of Coleridge's genius. He had too fine and sensitive an imagination to dwell in any perception for too long. He adapted brilliantly to whomever he accompanied. He spoke without limits or distinctions. He followed the glow-worm of an idea until it burst into flames above his head. Just as his poems thwart any real attempt at narrative, so his life and career seem plangent, incantatory, insistent but without any formal resolution. Yet it is the mark of his greatness that the reader does not want Rosemary Ashton's book to end. He was a Socrates in the wrong civilisation, a Hamlet in the right one, a man whose universal genius made him prodigal of his own.

In the zone of zealous hearts

An intellectual and psychological romp, Deborah Daley's first novel follows the lives of Nerida and Alexis. It begins with their separate sunny New Zealand childhoods, though the glamorous pair are destined to meet and fall in love. Daley creates an acidic sense of doom which constantly erodes the more saccharine flavours of the plot. Following the paradigm "families — they screw you up", Nerida is numbed by guilt about her mother's death and her father's subsequent dissolution. Alexis, meanwhile, intellectually hot-headed by his adoring parents, grows up to be the perfect narcissist. Such are the obvious legacies of their different upbringings, but the detail of cause and effect, of event and reaction are now to be played out.

As young adults, they land in London, where Nerida drifts into a successful modelling career. Drifting is her chief characteristic. As a result, her character teeters at the edge of tedium, but is saved by the suggestion that she is heading towards a more interesting existence. Alexis's life is altogether more turbulent. While a student, his childhood epilepsy returns to plague and bless him, bringing the gift of automatic writing. The brilliant papers on linguistics that result launch his academic career, the letter Z having an "intermittent influence" and triggering attacks. A quote from Balzac's *Z. Marcas* resonates: "Do you not discern in that letter Z an adverse influence? Does it not prefigure the wayward and fantastic progress of a storm-tossed life?"

References to "the strange letter Z" pile up like red

Tania Rice

THE STRANGE LETTER Z
By Debra Daley
Bloomsbury, £14.99

herring in a thriller. At Café Z in Paris, Alexis tells Nerida of his obsession with Zeugen's work *Narziss*, which inspires her to seduce him in the back of a cab. Playful though the use of the last chunk of the dictionary is, it smacks of over-indulgence.

The description of sex is erotically detailed, though proof, perhaps, of Kundera's theory that sex without its humorous side is banal. Meringue, however, may lose its appeal after Nerida suggests an alternative use for egg whites. She glides coolly along towards self-fulfilment, taking everything in her elegant stride. Alexis, faced with academic rivalry and Faustian temptation, is gripped by a sense of fraudulence: the grit in the narcissist's oyster. Hoping to alleviate his deteriorating condition, he proposes a sojourn in Mexico where the novel reaches its exotic climax.

When Alexis exhorts a colleague to "make something ordinary strange" he might be describing Daley's forte. But sometimes the narrative over-earns its living with its sliding changes of perspective, is cumbersome with ideas. Slough off this excess and there is, in the close observation, the manipulation of plot and character, a talented new writer at work. Typical is Daley's delightfully ironic description of buying provisions "from a young woman exercising gloom behind the counter of a delicatessen in Hampstead". On a larger scale, she shows great skill in her portrayal of children as invisibly damaged: damage adulthood cannot cure, but only allow a resolution.

GILES COREN

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The bloody opening of a long war

TO GRASP fully the complex political landscape of *All Souls' Rising* by Madison Smartt Bell (*Picador*, £15.99), think first of the French Revolution: the confusion of interests, the ebb and flow of public fortunes, the uncertainty, from one day to the next, of who was in control of whom.

Then imagine a little bit of France, Haiti in this case, which is at six weeks' remove from the mainland so that Royalist, Jacobin and Thermidorian jostle at the harbour for news of which faction has the ascendancy in Paris — or at least had it a few weeks before.

Now populate it not with two interest groups, but four: white royalist landowners (*grands blancs*); poor republican Creoles (*petits blancs*);

wealthy but disenfranchised mulattoes; and a black slave majority so horrifically treated that 20,000 Africans had to be imported every year just to keep the population constant.

The novel fills in the gaps left in historical accounts of the slave rebellion which brought Toussaint L'Ouverture — the "Black Napoleon" celebrated in one of Wordsworth's sonnets — to power. In the novel, the rebellion is instigated by the *grands blancs* to unify the Jacobin creoles against the mulattoes, whom the Revolution has sought to enfranchise, thus forcing them into an anti-Jacobin position and loyalty to the *ancien régime*.

Bell handles these complexities with confidence, operating manifold narrative voices

and seeking to understand all sides. But his concentration on the effect of class and race struggles on the individual makes this novel more a human than a political drama.

OUR TWO principal conductors through the burning cane fields are Antoine Hebert, an enlightened French doctor who has come to the island in search of his sister, and a freed slave called Rieu caught up in the revolution.

The doctor is the more successful construction. *Persuasion* on all sides, and, anachronistically liberal, he operates like an everyman, responding on our behalf to the atrocities of war.

For this is a graphically gruesome novel. First we have the iniquities carried out by

the whites: a woman eviscerates her pregnant maid with a razor because she has dropped a teapot; the very first scene has Hebert coming upon the impromptu crucifixion of a pregnant mulatto. The slaves do not stint in their revenge. White babies impaled on pikes become their standard and men are hung on meat hooks to be skinned alive.

As L'Ouverture takes control, however, the atrocities slow down and an equilibrium is temporarily achieved. We leave Haiti in 1793, before the worst of the carnage, and there are suggestions that Bell intends a trilogy. It is to be hoped that this is true, for while some in America have questioned the propriety of a white American appropriating the voice of a black slave to



The Haitian uprising, 1791

sell novels, this is a fascinating aspect of the French Revolution that is all too frequently ignored in the romantic excitement generated by "far far better" things.

GILES COREN

صحنه من الأصل

Roger Scruton on a writer's key to the 20th century

The novelist with quality to spare

The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire plunged its literature into a state of mourning. Josef Roth, Stefan Zweig and Hugo von Hofmannsthal have left unforgettable elegies to the culture which produced them; but even their great achievements pale beside the novel which Robert Musil began in 1918 and left unfinished at his death in 1942. *The Man without Qualities* is one of the longest novels in existence, and this new translation, including much of the material unpublished at Musil's death and many of the passages from his notebooks, shows not that Musil died too young to finish it (he was at work on it for more than 20 years), but that it has no conceivable ending. Or rather, there is only one event that could bring this aimless commotion, set in the Vienna of 1913, to an end — and that event is unthinkable. All the characters sense that it is there, but none of them can conceive it, and only the reader knows that it is destined to shatter their world so completely that their actions, in retrospect, will make no proper sense.

Ostensibly, the plot concerns a crazy scheme — the Parallel or Collateral Campaign, conceived by high society patriots in order to revitalise the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In fact, however, there is no plot. Nothing happens besides meetings — some devoted to the patriotic cause, some to the reckless human relations which grow around it. In a notebook Musil wrote: "The story that makes up this novel amounts to this: that the story that was supposed to be told in it is not told."

In other words, the book, like the characters described in it, avoids the unthinkable event which is soon to destroy "Kakania", and to threaten the soul of central Europe — the soul which achieved its highest and most despairing self-consciousness in this very novel.

Ulrich, the "man without qualities", in fact has many qualities — but only fleetingly, and observed with such self-irony that they do not

THE MAN
WITHOUT
QUALITIES
By Robert Musil
Picador, £40

adhere to him. He is a philosopher, an observer of human weakness, and an unscrupulous seducer. His dramatic point lies not in his character but in his thoughts, expressed with a wonderful gift for metaphor by a writer who rises to the height of poetic evocation just when he is being most scientifically exact.

Ulrich's life is shaped by



Musil: hinting at the unthinkable

his admiration for his cousin "Dionisia", instigator-in-chief of the patriotic campaign, by his lust for the nymphomaniac "Bonadea", and by his analytical obsession with Clarisse, the brilliantly portrayed schizoid wife of his best friend.

In Part III of the novel, however, all this reality is set aside, and Ulrich embarks on a "mystical union" with his sister Agathe, in which love, of a kind, hovers on the verge of carnal embodiment, and the tragicomic of Kakania sinks into the background.

Parallel to the story of Ulrich is that of the sex-murderer Moosbrugger. Moosbrugger is one of the great creations of modern literature, whose mad thoughts are conveyed with an imagination and finesse worthy of Dostoyevsky. He hears a girl laughing and "turns around quickly, only to look into a face as immov-

ably round as a hole in the ground into which a mouse has just slipped". His is the only glimpse we are offered of the world outside the salon and the study: it is a disordered world, in which Musil is clearly not at home, yet in which for that very reason he takes a penetrating interest.

The Man without Qualities is a vehicle for its author's philosophy, for his poetic gift and for his powers of observation. It is a book into which every human feeling is invited, only to be at once pinned to the wall. A terrible coldness wafts around even its warmest evocations, and the obsession with women and their sexuality is at times unbearable in its loveless objectivity. Nevertheless, whoever wishes to understand our century should read this novel, which so clearly shows the damage done to human relations by the habit of seeing them, in Musil's words, "not in a goddess but in a god-free way". Such was Musil's way of seeing them; and it explains the otherwise inexcusable nonsense of a mystical union with the sister, by which he sought to escape from the emotional void created on every side by his searing powers of analysis.

The Man without Qualities was first translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, and published in 1984, in an edition which leaves out the entire *Nachlass*. Sophie Wilkins's version is equally lively, and on the whole more accurate. Both versions will offend the philosophical reader, by translating "das Prinzip des unzureichenden Grundes", which refers to Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason, as "the Principle of Insufficient Cause". This shows ignorance; it also ruins one of Musil's most sustained and delightful ironies. Such pederasties apart, I would recommend Sophie Wilkins's translation as a conscientious attempt to give to the English reader a novel which is compared by the publisher, with only slight exaggeration, to *The Remembrance of Things Past* and *Ulysses*.

Daylight and magic

Andrew Roberts examines a well-balanced biography of the Queen and finds its author as judicious as she is honest and unflinching



Elizabeth II as both a very human Queen and an icon of Monarchy: a set of commemorative Coronation stamps, issued on June 3, 1953

Wednesday September 9, 2015 will be an important day in the life of Queen Elizabeth II, for she will then have reigned longer than any other British monarch. If she inherits her mother's family's longevity, it is not impossible for a nonagenarian Elizabeth to beat Queen Victoria's 63 years, seven months and two days record. We must hope that she does, and Sarah Bradford's book goes a long way towards explaining why.

In all the media hysteria which has greeted *Elizabeth* — or at least this newspaper's serialisation of it, as most of its critics cannot have read the book itself — no one has asked about its central message. It is simply that our present Queen is the most honest, dutiful, decent, professional and genuinely Christian monarch ever to sit on the British Throne.

The failings of some of Elizabeth II's family are all the starker in contrast with the near-perfection she has brought to the job. Just as the best human brains beat the best computers at chess, we have a very human Queen who does the job better than could any fully-programmed robot.

The result is that throughout all the strains of post-1952 Britain, there has been a national focus for our loyalty and civic unity, a powerful psychological force against social and political fissure which is denied to republican countries.

Sarah Bradford, the respected biographer of Disraeli, George VI and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, writes elegantly and well. The sturdy description of her by the enthusiastically non-academic Editor of *The Spectator* as "non-academic" would presumably also exclude his favourite historians Gibbon, George Buckle and Paul Johnson. Wit and generous, the author has nevertheless been deluged with controversy for this honest and restrained book, and all because of two pages. Sir Robert Rhodes James even denounced it on the basis of precisely two paragraphs, and under a headline ("The Mid-life Crisis of a Writer") so personally insulting and unfair I am sure he would not condone it.

The reason is not Bradford's research: she has covered all the sources open to her and interviewed among others the Earls of Carnarvon and Harewood, Lords Jenkins and Charteris, Ladies Longford and Mountbatten and the late Group Captain Peter Townsend. It is rather because she has applied to her biography of the head of state the same criteria that all serious modern biographers have for decades now applied to their subjects. She has said that private lives do matter and that if the subject

knows her husband may have been unfaithful it should be included, however tangentially. Any life of the Queen which ignored it entirely would have been rightly excoriated by the reviewers, and Bradford is nothing if not professional.

If anything, the author perhaps errs too much on the side of discretion. She does not mention by name the women with whom Prince Philip has conducted "flirtations and relationships" over the last half century. Compared to what she must have heard while writing this book, Sarah Bradford must have exercised enormous self-censorship, and has brilliantly drawn the teeth of the far more dangerous chequebook journalist extravaganzas promised by Kitty Kelley.

The Queen's more tolerant and wholly upper-class marital mores have allowed her to rise above her husband's wanderings and, as Bradford is at enormous pains to point out, a blissfully successful marriage has resulted. The fact that every so often his testosterone may get the better of him is not something Bradford particularly dwells on but neither is it something that she could conscientiously ignore.

Far from emerging with cuckold's horns, the Queen portrayed in this book is victorious, happy and glorious. Sarah Bradford's brave and honest decision not to keep her readers ignorant about something that has been common London society gossip for half a century must be applauded.

The abuse she has received for making money out of the book's serialisation says more about the culture of envy in the British tabloid press than it does about her. Stockbrokers, businessmen and even tabloid editors are not criticised for wishing to maximise profit on their products, yet the moment an author looks to gain from a book which might have taken, as in this case, four years to research and write, they are treated with disdain.

Elizabeth is a fine biography, but anyone reading it for sleaze will be hugely disappointed. The author is clearly a fervent monarchist, who along with John Osborne, Malcolm Muggeridge, John Gigg and others, has correctly perceived that the true threat to the monarchy comes not from open republicanism but from post-Victorian, inhumanly high expectations, fuelled by moronic elements in the media.

The best that can be hoped for, apart from a quick divorce and the efficient sidelining of Princess Diana, is that the heroine of this excellent biography should be "long to reign over us."

ELIZABETH
A Biography of Her
Majesty the Queen
By Sarah Bradford
Heinemann, £20

Happily ransacking the poetic mini-bar

POETRY

her inclusions deserves to be ignored, and her notes of introduction are exemplary. I doubt if this volume by itself will cause a re-drawing of the map of fame, but students and scholars alike should find it a useful resource.

Poems in the Underground (Cassell, £6.95 paperback) collects 162 poems that have been soothing or annoying commuters for the past ten years. A wide range of writers is represented — from Shakespeare to Dorothy Parker, the latter by her quarain *The Flaw in Paganism*: "Drink

and dance and laugh and lie/ Love, the resling midnight through/ For tomorrow we shall die! (But, alas, we never do.)"

The editors report that when this poem first appeared on the Tube, they received a phone call from a vicar asking permission to reprint it in the *Church Times*, which would doubtless have amused the author. These editors (Gerard Benson, Judith Chermak, Cicely Herbert) merit praise in that high and low nearly all their choices are inspired. Compulsive readers with an aversion to adverts for tempers are forever in their debt. I think it was Camille Paglia

who said that poetry is the connecting link between body and mind: in which case she might enjoy Christopher Hurd's anthology *Erotic Verse* (Robinson, £5.99 paperback). Splendidly rude, this runs from Chaucer to Thom Gunn, and finds room for Eskimo Nell as well as Christina Rossetti. Nice to see a slice of the pseudo-Byronic *Don Leon* included, even if the editor ascribes it to Anon when G. Wilson Knight proved 40 years ago that it is by George Colman the Younger. An unusual item is W. H. Auden's uncollected *The Platonic Blow*, which he seems to have written as a

porno exercise parodying the clotted metres employed in the Arthurian poems of his "saintly" friend Charles Williams (curious how these metres suit carnal matters better than they match their original transcendental purpose).

My one criticism would be that there are more vigorously colloquial versions of Catullus by C. H. Sisson than the ones favoured here. The real test of a book like this, though, is the strength of its obscurities by Anon — and here Hurd comes up trumps, with all the stuff you would expect (such as a complete text of *The Good Ship Venus*) as well as a few limericks new at least to me:

"A remarkable tribe are the Sweenies./ Renowned for the length of their penes./ The hair on their balls/ Sweeps the floors of their halls./ But they don't care for women, the meanees."

No Sweenies or meanees but lots of Seamus Heaney in Patrick Crotty's *Modern Irish Poetry* (Blackstaff Press,

£14.99 paperback). Some of the results are too rich even for putting on the roses, but of the variety and abundance of contemporary Irish verse this excellent anthology leaves no doubt. Women's poetry is strongly represented by, among others, Eavan Boland and Medbh McGuckian, as well as by the liveliest of the Irish-language poets, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill.

ROBERT NYE

A black box of dystopic trifles

Journalism has a nasty habit of disappearing into the ether or, slightly better, to the bottom of the guinea pig cage. Only a minuscule percentage finds a good enough excuse to be recycled in anthological form. This collection's is that it is by J. G. Ballard, who has roped in a lot of old pieces under a banner title that works overtime to justify their resuscitation.

A *User's Guide to the Millennium* includes Ballard's pensises on Mae West, Winnie the Pooh and Coca-Cola which, far from getting you through to the next millennium, do no more than fill an idle minute the way ordinary journalism does. But the bulk of the stuff, much of it book reviews, is on Ballard's more familiar territory, covering subjects on which he will have held firm opinions long before the literary editor set him his task: pieces about the future (its past, present and future), space (outer and inner), sci-



Seminal realism in science fiction cinema: *Destination Moon* (1950) from *Science Fiction: The Aurum Film Encyclopedia*, edited by Phil Hardy (Aurum Press, £25)

Jasper Rees

A USER'S GUIDE TO THE
MILLENNIUM
Essays and Reviews
By J. G. Ballard
HarperCollins, £18

ence, fiction, science fiction, Shanghai, Shepperton. And so on into an infinite variety of loosely linked obsessions.

In 30 years of being invited to write about the moon landings and "whether-the-sci-fi novel?" (about which, surely, fewer people care than he imagines) he couldn't possibly get away with not repeating ideas and phrases.

The infamous photo of the napalmed Vietnamese girl

obsesses him. He is fond of suggesting that Neil Armstrong is the century's most significant, and yet most forgotten icon. And does he ever go on about the supremacy of

William Burroughs's *The Naked Lunch*. At least his repetitions have a mighty breadth. If any modern thinker can claim to have a foot in both of Cyril Connolly's cultures, then it is Ballard. You sense that he proudly, even ruthlessly, patrols the patch. There's a cruel swipe at Jonathan Miller, one of his fellow two-culture-cultures who, he says, "brilliantly mimics originality". Ballard's own originality

is partly a case of going to odd sources for inspiration. The ten favourite books he lists in 1992 include the LA Yellow Pages and also *The Black Box*, a collection of cockpit voice-recorder transcripts.

These are examples of what he calls invisible literatures: faxes, e-mail, press releases, "obscure genre fictions wrapped in metallised jackets that we scarcely notice on our way to the duty-free shop". He even reviews a piece of invisible literature: *How To Achieve Sexual Ecstasy*, in which, making one of his trademark predictions about the dystopia in which our descendants will live, he imagines a near future in which "sex does not exist, only eroticism".

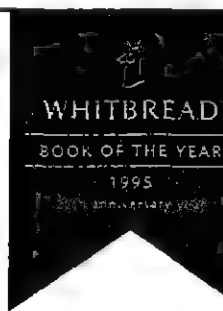
George stubs out his cigarette and makes a

kind of snorting noise in his throat and settles back into his chair to watch Bunty making his cup of tea (well, this is 1959). He clears his throat and spits into his handkerchief just as Bunty puts the cup and saucer in front of him with a glazed expression on her face. This is the expression she wears when she picks up George's socks, handkerchiefs and underpants (wearing rubber gloves) and drops them into a bucket of Dettol to soak before they are allowed to join the rest of our barely-sullied washing in the English Electric.

from *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*
by Kate Atkinson
Published by Black Swan @ £6.99

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Granada to raise Forte prices

By DAVID CHURCHILL

THE Granada Group is expected to lead a rush by British hoteliers to raise hotel prices after its successful £3.8 billion takeover of Forte on Tuesday. Granada is understood to be planning to push up rates by up to 10 per cent at the Forte hotels it acquired, including the Travelodge and Posthouse chains, to take advantage of a strong demand for rooms.

Industry sources suggest that Granada may increase the standard rate of £34.50 at the 120 Travelodges it has acquired by between £3 and £4 a night, leapfrogging the £35.50 a night that Whitbread charges in its Travel Inn chain of hotels.

Whitbread had hoped to buy Forte's Travelodges for £1 billion if the Forte family had been able to successfully defend against the bid for their group. Whitbread may now take the opportunity to bolster its profit margins by matching any new Travelodge price increases.

Granada's plans to raise prices are being followed by other hotel chains around Britain, according to Jorge Elgaard, American Express vice-president for its hotel relations group. He said: "The top hotels in London have already made it clear that rates will go up by between 5 and 10 per cent this year, and in some cases a little more, as a result of the very high demand."

Mark Phillips, a senior consultant for Horwath, a hotel consultancy, described London hotel prices as "rising ahead" this year. But he said that the picture was not as strong in the regions.

"We expect hotels in the major regional cities to try to follow London and put up

rates this year, probably by about 5 per cent or so," he said. "But outside the urban areas it is still pretty tough for hoteliers. About three-quarters of the UK hotel stock is in regional towns or on the edge of big cities and they will have little scope to push up prices this year."

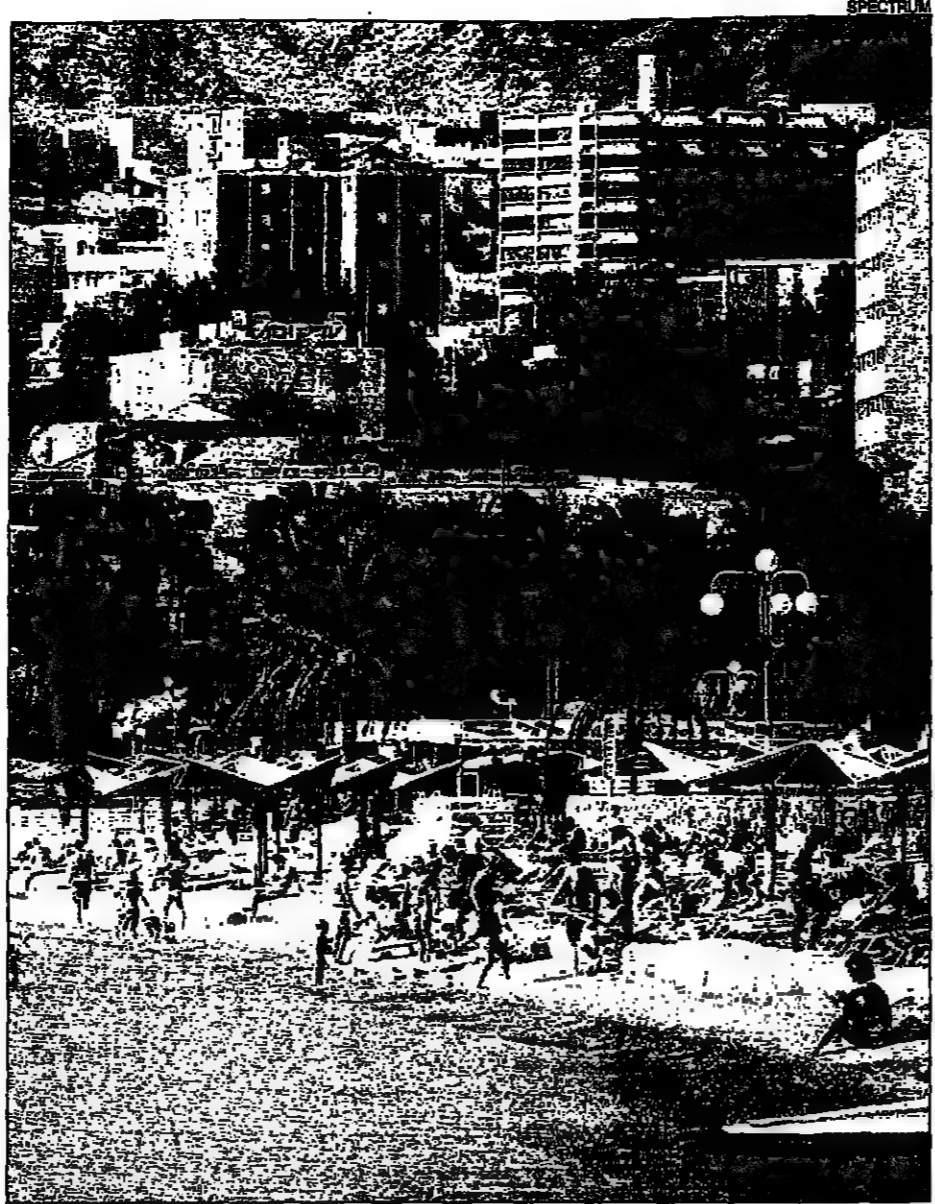
Stakis, the Scottish-based hotel group, has said it is likely to seek increases of up to 5 per cent this year as a result of higher demand for its regional city hotels.

But Amex's Mr Elgaard says he has already detected signs this month that some companies are resisting paying the higher prices being charged by London hotels.

"There is a little price resistance clearly being detected by our staff," he reported. Amex has a special hotel booking centre for its corporate clients which is aimed at securing lowest prices. Next month it plans to publish a UK guide to more than 600 business hotels at which, Mr Elgaard claims, Amex can negotiate rates some 40 per cent below published prices.

Hotel industry experts, however, believe that Granada's plans to sell Forte's Meridian business hotels and luxury Exclusive hotels, such as the Hyde Park Hotel in London and George V in Paris, may distort the market. New owners of these hotels are likely to want to raise prices even further to recover their costs of acquisition.

But Horwath's Mr Phillips said: "We could be at the top of the business cycle for hotel demand this year." This could make it more difficult for Granada to secure the best prices for the Forte Luxury hotels and its stake in the Savoy Group.



The Israel-Jordan accord will allow Eilat to expand along the coast towards the border

Eilat-Aqaba resort agreed

FROM RACHAEL JOLLEY IN ISRAEL

THE leaders of Israel and Jordan have signed an historic treaty to create a holiday resort on the Gulf of Aqaba which would link the Israeli town of Eilat with the Jordanian town of Aqaba.

Shimon Peres, the Israeli Prime Minister, and Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan last week agreed a blueprint for the region's tourism, and signed the Eilat-Aqaba accord in Aqaba before sailing to Eilat five kilometres away, to celebrate their plans. The agreement comes after the peace treaty signed between the two countries more than a year ago.

Within a few weeks, it is hoped, the two cities will be linked by regular bus and

boat services and an airport serving both cities is to be built within five years. Up to now the expansion of the Israeli resort has not been possible because of the tension between the two countries, which has prevented hotels being built close to the border. Now, hotels, restaurants and tourist facilities are to be built along the Eilat coastline and a similar growth is expected in Aqaba. Dov Shari, the newly appointed director of regional co-operation and a member of the Eilat-Aqaba development committee, says the agreement will make it much easier for tourists to book holidays to both Jordan and Israel. Visa restrictions are to be

eased, so speeding up the border crossing.

He says: "We are now entering a new era. We are going to co-operate and it will be of benefit to all." The new airport will be about 12 kilometres from Eilat, probably on Jordanian territory. At the moment, all flights from the UK arrive at Ovda, a former military airbase, and the new location will be 30 minutes nearer the resorts.

Mr Shari predicted that Egypt would also sign a similar agreement, so joining in with Israel and Jordan's tourism venture, and allowing visitors easy access between the three countries, all within a 30-minute drive of each other along the coast.

Cliveden wins world rating

By TONY DAVE

CLIVEDEN, the historic house on the banks of the Thames in Berkshire, has been rated the third best hotel in the world by readers of the American travel magazine, *Condé Nast Traveler*.

It is one of 24 British properties — more than any other European country — that made the "gold list" of the world's 500 best hotels and cruise lines.

Readers praised Cliveden's "fine panelling that goes on forever", the "excellent French food", the "splendid period pieces" in the rooms. They described the grounds and topiary as "second to none".

The hotel scored 96.4 per cent in the survey of 33,000 readers and finished behind the Four Seasons Resort, Bali, and the Four Seasons Hotel, Milan. London's Four Seasons Hotel achieved the second-best rating in Britain and was praised for its luxurious decor and excellent cuisine.

Claridge's, the Savoy and Ritz hotels in London, and the Royal Crescent in Bath and Chewton Glen, Hampshire, scored well, as did Llangloed Hall in Wales, described as "a lovely country house in the spectacular Wye Valley".

Take a trek for children

By MARTIN SYMINGTON

TWO NEW opportunities have arisen for intrepid travellers this summer, both sponsored for the benefit of children's charities.

The Friends of Russian Children (FORC) is organising a 450-mile cycle ride from Ngorod, near St Petersburg, to Moscow. It is appealing for 100 volunteers for the ten-day ride between June 30 and 30. Accommodation is a mixture of camping and budget hotels.

Each participant will be required to raise a minimum of £1,000 for a project to improve conditions at a Mos-

cow children's hospital burns unit. A further £1,000 may also be raised by sponsorship to cover the full cost of the journey. One of the first to sign up has been Carol Thatcher. Phone 0171-720 9219 for details.

Another 100 are being sought by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). It has linked up with the Africa specialist tour operator Gane and Marshall to organise a six-day hike across the Great Rift Valley in Tanzania, led by nomadic Maasai tribesmen with camping en route.

The trip, from July 29 to August 11, is completed with a safari drive through the region's national parks, staying in lodges. It takes in the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater and the bird-watching Eden, Lake Manyara.

The cost per person is £1,995, of which £500 will go directly to the NSPCC. A further £50 for each walker will be donated to a Tanzanian children's charity. Each participant is also asked to raise an additional minimum of £250 through sponsorship. Contact Gane and Marshall on 0181-441 9592.



Rhinos in Tanzania, one of the sights awaiting 100 volunteers hiking for the NSPCC

Thomson turns to Ireland

THOMSON is to sell package holidays in Ireland — its first foray into the potentially lucrative market. *Harvey Elliott* writes. The company hopes to persuade the Irish to buy at least 40,000 packages to the traditional resorts of the Mediterranean, the Canary Islands and Florida for this summer.

Steve Allen, commercial director, says at least 350,000 summer packages are now sold in Ireland and that this is likely to increase to 400,000. Budget and Falcon account for 80 per cent of sales, and Thomson believes it can compete on price and quality.

Thomson will watch the development of the new operation carefully. If successful, it could eventually expand to other European countries. "The Ireland operation has the distinct advantage that everyone speaks English," Mr Allen says. "Although the Irish do have certain preferences and do some things differently to our British customers, basically they are looking for the same sort of holiday."

Striking gold

Forty Hotels scored an ironic victory when it was named as both the UK and Europe's leading hotel group in the *Travel Weekly* Golden Globes Awards on Tuesday. The presentation at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London, came only hours after Forte lost its takeover battle with Granada. Jackie Kennaghan, Forte sales and marketing director, described the award as the "end of an era." Thomson Holidays scooped the awards, winning five Golden Globes including the premier award for the Best Travel Company of the Year.

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Room service? Send up a bicycle, please

By QUENTIN LETTS

AMERICAN hotels are offering a new room service facility alongside the customary shoe-shine, laundry and midnight sandwich platters. Guests can now ring down for an exercise bicycle.

The innovation reflects not only the keep-fit fad, but also a growing reluctance among some people to use hotel gymnasiums. Women are said to fear late-night trips to the exercise suite, which may often be in the basement. For portly businessmen there is the embarrassment factor of sweatily conducting one's physical jerks in the company of a more svelte male.

A number of hotels have therefore introduced room-service treadmills, step-up machines and exercise bikes.

They add as much as \$30 to the bill, but Elisa Ross, of the Ritz-Carlton in Aspen, Colorado, said that guests are happy to pay. The minimalist Royalton Hotel in New York, popular with rock stars, has gone further, introducing rooms which have small exercise units en suite. Celebrities welcome the chance to do their fitness routines away from prying eyes, said the hotel's manager, Keith Space.

Brian Davidson, a director at Lifecycles, which makes the fold-up exercise machines, said that demand had blossomed in the last year. The Hilton and Marriott chains are testing the devices, and they have been introduced at some lower budget chains such as Days Inn.

VALENTINE BARGAINS OF THE WEEK

FOR those who would like to plan something a little more original than a rose and a card for their loved ones on Valentine's Day, *The Times* offers a selection of holidays and hotel stays specially designed for romantics:

- including return scheduled flights, breakfast, flowers and fruit in your room, start at £538 per person. Details: 0181-686 5533.
- A DAY trip to Venice on February 14, including a guided tour of the city by water taxi, is available from Lunn Poly for £238 per couple. The company is also offering a two-night break in York on February 14 and 15 for £114 per couple and has weekend breaks available from February 16 in Amsterdam, Paris and New York for those who cannot get away on the day itself. Details: 01203 225888.
- FOUR nights, including February 14, for the price of three at the seductive 5-star Hotel Eden in Rome is being offered by Citalia. Prices, per person. Details: 01252 319448.
- VALENTINE'S Day at the Venice Carnival forms part of a three-night break offered by Crystal Italy in the centrally located 3-star Hotel Bonvecchiati. Price: £331 per person. Details: 0181-390 5554.
- THE chance to cuddle up to your partner for the night of February 14 in a two-person tent against a background of Everest is offered as part of a 17-day adventure holiday from Explore Worldwide. Departing from London on February 9, the holiday includes sightseeing, trekking and some hotel accommodation. Price: £1,315.
- SKIING through the gentle wooded hills of central France on Valentine's Day with a candlelit gastronomic dinner to follow is the suggestion of Headwater Holidays. Departing on February 10, the week's holiday in Pailhères costs £492 per person including full board and Nordic ski pack. Details: 01606 486999.
- BARGAIN holidays to include Valentine's Day on the island of Cyprus, birthplace of Aphrodite, the "goddess of love", are available from Cyprian Holidays. Prices for a week including flights, at the 5-star Coral Beach Hotel start at £290 per person, less than half the peak season price. A week at the 5-star Paphos Amathus Beach Hotel costs £390. Details: 0181-340 7612.

CREATE a new man, is the theme of Inter-Continental Hotels' programme being launched on St Valentine's Day and lasting throughout 1996. The programme, for men only, includes a Rolls-Royce transfer to Harvey Nichols store in Knightsbridge for a facial, manicure and haircut before having a meeting with a personal image and presentation consultant. Accommodation is in one of the chain's top suites at its four hotels in London, along with dinner for two and a bouquet of red roses for the man. Prices start at £810 per couple at the Forum Hotel and go up to £2,500 at the Inter-Continental on Hyde Park Corner. Details: 0181-847 2277.

□ THE Stoke-on-Trent Moat House is celebrating St Valentine's on Friday, February 16 with a two-night package, dinner-dance, red roses and full English breakfast for £92.95 per person. Details: 01782 609988.

□ THE Hotel de Crillon in

Paris has a special "romancing the Crillon" package priced at Fr3,900 (£513) per couple per night which includes a champagne breakfast, flowers in a de luxe room and a gift of a Baccarat crystal heart. Details: 00 33 1 44711501.

□ CHAMPAGNE and a dozen red roses are on offer from the Ritz Hotel, London, on Valentine's night, along with a continental breakfast the next morning. One night's accommodation is £225 plus VAT for two while a champagne dinner dance in the hotel's Louis XVI restaurant costs another £125 per person. Details: 0171-493 8181.

□ STAY at the Rummymede Hotel on the banks of the River Thames close to Windsor and enjoy not only a special dinner at £22.50 per person but also an extensive range of health and beauty treatments at the hotel's spa, including a back, neck and

shoulder massage and mini facial for £36. Details: 01784 436171.

□ PROPOSE to your loved one on February 14 at Bullocks restaurant at the Athenaeum hotel in London and, if accepted, your wedding night can be spent free in the hotel. The special dinner costs £40 per person, including a glass of pink champagne. Details: 0171-499 3464.

□ CANNIZARO House, a Georgian mansion set on Wimbledon Common, has a special five-course meal on Valentine's night for £39.75 with overnight accommodation at £59 per person including breakfast. Details: 0181-879 1464.

□ A ROMANTIC dinner dance is being held at the Waldorf Hotel in London on February 14, at £85 per person along with a prize draw to win a weekend for two in Paris, travelling by Eurostar. Details: 0171-636 2400.

BRITISH AIRWAYS latest World Offers programme is now on sale. Return fares include Cologne for £79, Frankfurt £104, Madrid £96, Paris £69 and Venice £118. Details: 0181-897 4000.

□ AIR UK's riposte is a new range of saver fares, including Copenhagen £149, Hamburg £108, Milan £129, Munich £120, Nice £96, Florence £149 and Zurich £129. Details: 0345 666777.

□ TWO passengers bound for South-East Asia can fly in business-class comfort for half price. Bridge The World Travel has a companion fare of £1,137 return per person for round-trip business flights with Malaysia Airlines be-

tween London and Kuala Lumpur or Singapore. Both Asian cities make ideal jumping off points for other destinations in that region. Details: 0171-485 5868.

□ EASYJET brings its no-frills fares to the Luton-Aberdeen route from tomorrow. The airline will sell all seats at £29 one way during the initial one-week period. Details: 01592 445566.

□ AMERICAN AIRLINES is offering a 40,000-mile bonus for frequent-flyer members booking first or business class, round-trip transatlantic flights. Details: 0345 567567.

□ BUSINESS class passen-

gers flying ANA to Japan qualify for benefits worth several hundred pounds. These include a night's free five-star accommodation in Tokyo and chauffeur-driven cars to and from Heathrow. Details: 0171-355 1155.

□ BA Executive Club members will get triple air miles when booking full-fare Deutsche BA (the German British Airways) flights between Gatwick and Bremen. Details: 0990 322322.

□ MANCUNIANs can save about 30 per cent when flying business class to the Gulf. The Travel Bug, a local agent, is charging £1,229 return on Emirates from Manchester to Dubai.

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Dallas Cowboys coach targets his critics before Super Bowl shoot-out

Switzer sees salvation within reach

FROM OLIVER HOLT
IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA

A RELIGIOUS fervour that seems foreign to the godless wastes of most professional sport has always clung to the Dallas Cowboys. Their former coach, Tom Landry, was known as God's Coach, and their former quarterback, Roger Staubach, was God's Quarterback. Out there, where the vastness of Texas inspires awe in nature and the land gushes with oil, it is easy to graft a little divine providence on to the football team.



In the past two years, though, the spiritual waters have become muddied. As the Cowboys prepare for their third Super Bowl in four years here on Sunday, as hot favourites to beat the Pittsburgh Steelers, the religious imagery remains, but it is confused. The problem is their



Switzer directs operations as the Cowboys progress towards their third Super Bowl in four years. Photograph: Doug Pensinger/Allsport

head coach, Barry Switzer. His legions of critics have taken to calling him "the anti-coach" and he talks about how the qualities of "redemption and vindication" have slipped from his grasp.

Men like Landry and Don Shula, the recently-deposed Miami Dolphins head coach, acted like evangelists and the shock of their passing has not been eased by the ascension of a man with Switzer's reputation. The demons have raged around him since he was a child growing up in the poverty-stricken backwoods of Arkansas, where his bootlegger father was shot dead by police. His mother committed suicide when he was 18.

He found a measure of salvation in building an outstanding 15-year record as head coach of the University of Oklahoma before chaos returned. He encouraged his young players to dress how they wanted and say what they wanted, but they went too far. One was arrested for shooting a team-mate, three faced rape charges and the quarterback was found at-

tempting to sell cocaine to an undercover FBI agent. Switzer was forced to resign.

There was an inevitable outcry two years ago when the Cowboys' controversial owner, Jerry Jones, dismissed Landry's popular successor, Jimmy Johnson, despite two successive Super Bowl triumphs, and handed Switzer the job. Some players threatened to quit and commentators said Switzer was just an obedient vehicle for Jones's coaching ambitions.

Switzer was pilloried when the Cowboys failed to reach a third consecutive Super Bowl at the end of his first year and, earlier this season, he was harangued for tactical blunders that cost the team a

victory against the Philadelphia Eagles. That led to headlines like "Bozo the Coach" and "Dumb and Dumber". "He doesn't get it," Mike Ditka, the former Chicago Bears coach, said. "He's missing the whole boat."

His descent into darkness seemed inevitable, but, as the Cowboys fought their way impressively towards the Sun Devil Stadium here, the critics began to waver. Suddenly, his players began saying how much they respected him, how he may not be a clever manipulator like Johnson but is a subtle motivator, that he boosts the confidence of his men with his support. He is on the verge of transformation from sinner to saint and there

is nothing like the concentrated hype of Super Bowl week to accelerate the process.

Deion Sanders, the Cowboys' celebrated cornerback and receiver, led the backlash of praise with typical immoderation yesterday. "Barry's a great guy, man," he said. "To criticise him was really uncalled for. Soon Barry will look like the genius he is. He's a great coach and a great friend. We stick up for Barry because we gotta lotta love for him. There ain't no monkey on his back."

Switzer, 58, makes a good job of his own defence, too. There is no bitterness in his words, even if there is nervousness in his demeanour. He is candid, amiable and

articulate. After you listen to his players affirming their admiration for him, hear his explanations of his actions and remember the exalted position the Cowboys find themselves in, "Bozo the Coach" takes on the air of devilish invention.

"They say this is still Jimmy's team and that I have not made any changes," he said, "but to have done so would have just been ego and that is unimportant to me. The smart thing is to mess things up in a great team. The dumb thing is to change things just to make a show of it."

"People say I'm not assertive enough, but I don't have to dog-cuss anybody to get my message across to them. When

I played, if somebody threw me a bouquet or patted me on the rear end, I gave him greater effort."

"You'll always have your critics, but to me, they're all molecules in the spectrum of the universe. Vindication and redemption are not part of me. If I could win over all of them, it might be, but after 35 years in this sport, I know that is not possible. They can sit back and take their shots when they want to. They have had to pull back right now, but they'll relax and fire when it's time to fire."

Salvation may be his if Dallas win on Sunday. Lose, though, and America will make him a martyr to the Cowboys' cause.

Beadsworth banks on financing Olympic medal bid

FROM EDWARD GORMAN
SAILING CORRESPONDENT
IN MIAMI

ANDY BEADSWORTH has the talent to win a gold medal at the Olympic Games in Savannah this summer, but he may not have the money. Going for gold in sailing now requires a full-time programme from the completion of the national trials to the Games themselves — a ten-month intensive schedule — and Beadsworth, the British Olympic Soling team member, with his crew, Barry Parkin and Adrian Stead, has calculated that he needs around £120,000 to fund the campaign. He is still nearly £60,000 short.

Yesterday, he was training at the Key Biscayne Yacht Club before the opening races in the Miami Olympic Classes Regatta get under way today. His mind, though, was on finance.

"What we are trying to avoid is playing catch up," he said. The trio spent about £50,000 of their own money to get to the national trials in Weymouth last August. Since then, National Lottery funds have bought them a new boat, costing £30,000, and they have received £35,000 from the Royal Yachting Association. They are getting help from Mars, for whom Parkin works, and from rigging and clothing manufacturers, but there is still a yawning gap, which an expected grant from the Sports Aid Foundation will not fill.

If they do not get the money, they will compromise. "We'll have to pare down what we spend," Parkin said, "and we'll end the Olympics with huge overdrafts."

Beadsworth knows how that feels, having taken 3½ years to pay off the £12,000 debt he was left after his unsuccessful Olympic trials in the Soling class in 1992. □ Beadsworth and Sue Carr, the British women's 470 team, have secured a £25,000 sponsorship from Yale, the security products company.

Australia stalwart decides to leave Test scene

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

DAVID BOON is to retire from international cricket after the third Test against Sri Lanka starting at the Adelaide Oval today. The Australia No 3 has scored 7,334 runs, including 21 centuries, in 106 Test appearances since making his debut against West Indies in 1984-85. Boon, left out of his country's World Cup squad, is to continue playing for Tasmania.

Brian Lara has been included in the West Indies squad for the World Cup next month, despite his last-minute withdrawal from the team that played in the World Series Cup in Australia.

The selectors have also recalled Keith Arthurton, a middle-order batsman, and kept faith with the wicketkeeper, Courtney Browne. Phil Simmons, Stuart Williams and Andy Cummins have been dropped from a party that includes only one specialist opening batsman.

New Zealand's England's first opponents in the World Cup, have recalled the all-rounders, Chris Harris and Shane Thomson, to their squad. Thomson will be the second spinner behind Dipak Patel. The fast bowler, Danny Morrison, who missed the two Tests against Zimbabwe, returns after injury.

The opening pair, Grant Flower and Stuart Carlisle, both scored half-centuries before Zimbabwe settled for a draw in the second Test at Eden Park. Set 367 to beat New Zealand, they finished at 246 for four.

Alamgir Sherryar, 22, the former Leicestershire left-arm fast bowler, who took a hat-trick against Durham on his championship debut in 1994, has joined Worcestershire on a two-year contract. NEW ZEALAND SQUAD: I. K. Gurney (captain), N. J. Astle, C. L. Cairns, S. P. Lanning, M. C. Hogg, P. J. Harris, G. R. Lawson, D. K. Morrison, D. J. Nash, D. N. Pot, A. C. Pore, S. A. Thomson, R. G. Twiss, C. M. Swainson. WEST INDIES SQUAD: R. B. Richardson (captain), J. C. Adams, C. E. Ambrose, K. L. Arthurton, I. R. Bashir, C. O. Browne, S. L. Campbell, S. Chandrasekar, C. D. Gibson, R. A. Harper, R. G. Holder, C. L. Hooper, B. C. Lara, C. A. Walsh.

Court of Appeal

Law Report January 25 1996

Chancery Division

Power to replace council

Regina v Secretary of State for the Environment, Ex parte Berkshire County Council and Others

Before Lord Justice Kennedy, Lord Justice Auld and Mr Justice Tuckey

[Judgment January 24]

Where the Local Government Commission recommended that the existing two-tier structure of seven councils in Berkshire should be replaced by a single-tier structure of five new unitary authorities, involving abolition of the county council and the combination of two existing authorities, the Secretary of State for the Environment's powers of modification under the Local Government Act 1992 were sufficient to enable him to order that the two existing authorities should remain separate.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment allowing an appeal from Mr Justice Collins on October 6, 1995, who had given judgment for Berkshire County Council, who had challenged a decision by the secretary of state, announced on March 21, 1995, purporting to give effect to the final recommendations of the commission in relation to the council's existing area.

Mr Stephen Richards and Mr Robert Jay, for the secretary of state; Mr Duncan Ouseley, QC and Mr Clive Lewis for Berkshire

County Council; Mr James Goudie, QC and Mr Paul Nichols for Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

LORD JUSTICE KENNEDY said that the issue could be put very simply: the commission recommended that two existing borough councils, Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead, be combined to form a new unitary authority. That was a discrete recommendation which section 17(1) of the Local Government Act 1992 permitted the secretary of state to accept, reject or implement in a modified form. What he could not do according to the applicants, whatever language he might use, was to reject the recommendation and implement something different, and that they contended, was what happened.

The secretary of state submitted that the commission had recommended structural change for each existing district or borough council, and in addition a boundary change to facilitate structural change.

It was the structural change, which commanded more or less universal support, which was the driving force, and once that was realised it became possible to consider whether accepting or rejecting the proposed boundary change was more than a modification of the recommendation.

As to what amounted to a

modification Mr Richards relied on what was said by Mr Justice Megarry in *Legg v LEA* (1972) 1 WLR 1245, 1257: "To some extent the matter must be one of impression... For one proposal to be fairly regarded as a modification of another proposal, one must be able to perceive enough in it of that other to recognise it as still being that other proposal, even though changed."

In relation to the statutory provisions which were being considered, Mr Justice Jowitt said in *R v Secretary of State for the Environment, Ex parte Lancashire County Council* (1994) 4 All ER 165, 173: "... although the secretary of state has wide powers to modify the commission's recommendations, he cannot transform them so that they become a different animal. It is a question of degree."

Mr Ouseley contended that careful reading of section 14 of the 1992 Act and of the commission's recommendations showed that the proposed structural and boundary changes were so interlinked that it was not possible for the secretary of state to accept the structural change and reject the boundary change. If the secretary of state did not agree with the composite recommendations he could invoke section 15 and direct a further review in relation to that area, but he could not, Mr Ouseley submitted, deal with the recommendation

as he did. That amounted to a rejection of the recommendation and a substitution of a decision of his own.

His Lordship concluded that the case had suffered from a consideration of individual statutory provisions which had been too close to lose sight of the relatively simple structure of the 1992 Act. Pursuant to section 13 the secretary of state had directed the Local Government Commission to conduct a review of the whole county of Berkshire. That enabled the commission to recommend the type of changes defined in section 14. That submission empowered the secretary of state to give effect to all or any of the recommendations with or without modifications.

Although the five unitary authorities option was embraced by the commission as its first recommendation, the commission's form of presentation was not conclusive, as Mr Justice Laws had pointed out in *R v Secretary of State for the Environment, Ex parte Wycombe District Council* (unreported, May 25, 1995).

For each of the five areas considered the recommendation was that there be structural change to a single tier of local government, and for one of those five areas there was recommended a boundary change which, for economic reasons, the commission considered necessary to facilitate the structural change.

The recommendations were free standing in that the secretary of state could have accepted the recommendation to create a unitary authority in one borough and rejected the remaining recommendations, but there was also a degree of interlinkage as was demonstrated if one envisaged the secretary of state deciding to create four unitary authorities but taking no action in relation to the fifth. The rump of the county would be left with two tiers of local government.

That showed that section 17(1) of the 1992 Act had to be read in context, and given a generous interpretation. The boundary change proposed, although substantial, was only proposed to facilitate the proposed structural change.

It might have been geographically quite minor, and yet, if Mr Ouseley was right, the secretary of state would have been tied. He could not have rejected the recommended boundary change and given effect to all the proposed structural changes having modified (his Lordship used the word advisedly) the area in which one of the recommendations for structural change was in take effect. That could not be how section 17(1) was intended to operate.

Lord Justice Auld and Mr Justice Tuckey agreed.

Solicitors: Treasury Solicitor; Sharpe Pritchard for Mr D. K. L. Over; Redding; Mr A. J. Jack, Bracknell.

Adams and Others v Lancashire County Council and Another

Before Mr Justice Robert Walker [Judgment January 17]

Council Directive 77/187/EEC, the acquired rights directive, (OJ 1977 No L61/26) clearly required member states to provide, on the transfer of an undertaking, protection for employees' accrued pension rights, so that the omission to require provision for the protection of prospective pension rights, had to be regarded as intentional. Article 3(3) had been correctly transposed into the domestic law of the United Kingdom by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (SI 1981 No 1794). It was therefore unnecessary to make a reference to the European Court of Justice.

Mr Justice Robert Walker, in dismissing an originating summons issued on October 4, 1994 by Barbara Adams and ten other school dinner ladies, previously employed by Lancashire County Council, after a successful competitive tender to take over their work by the third defendant, BET Catering Services Ltd.

Article 3 of Directive 77/187 provides: "1. The transferor's rights and obligations arising from a contract of employment... existing on the date of a transfer within the meaning of article 1(1) shall, by reason of such transfer, be transferred to the transferee..."

"2. Following the transfer... the transferee shall continue to observe the terms and conditions agreed in any collective agreement on the same terms applicable to the transferee under that agreement..."

"3. Paragraphs 1 and 2 shall not deprive employees' rights to old-age, invalidity or survivors' benefits under supplementary company or inter-company pensions schemes outside the statutory social security schemes in member states."

Member states shall adopt the measures necessary to protect the interests of employees and of persons no longer employed in the transferor's business at the time of the transfer... in respect of rights conferring on them immediate or prospective entitlement to old-age benefits, including survivors' benefits, under supplementary schemes referred to in the first subparagraph."

Mr Brian Langstaff, QC and Miss Helen Mountfield for the plaintiffs; Mr Patrick Elias, QC and Mr Jason Coppell for Lancashire; Mr David Pannick, QC and Mr Peter Cranfield for BET.

MR JUSTICE ROBERT WALKER said that the Government's position was that it had implemented the second subparagraph of article 3(3) by the social security legislation now enacted in Part IV of the Pension Schemes Act 1993.

It was common ground that the directive had to be construed

purposely; and Mr Langstaff's central point was that since pension rights were recognised by Community law as a form of pay, it was unfair to his clients to come to work for BET one Monday, finding, because they no longer had pension rights in respect of current service, their total pay was less than when they had stopped work for the council on Friday, obviously contrary to legislative intention.

In fact, however, the directive's final form bore almost no resemblance to the original proposal; so it might be conjectured that the Community had found the matter controversial and difficult.

Two points, however, seemed clear: that its general purpose was to protect workers' rights in a period of rapid economic and technological change via partial transposition of their rights and that its final text did, for reasons which might have been practical or political or a mixture, make an exception for pension rights.

His Lordship set out all three parties' principal submissions on the directive, referring to some two dozen authorities, before concluding that it was a short point, on which he had very little doubt.

The first subparagraph of article 3(3) used wide, general language to make an exception from the wide, general language of article 3(1); the European Court decision in *Abels v Bedrijfsvereniging voor de Metaalnindustrie* (Case 135/83) (1985) ECR 4694 was at least consistent with, and probably supported that view.

The second subparagraph, on the other hand, used much more complicated and precise language to identify the interests which it was the duty of member states to protect for both current employees and ex-employees, language apt to describe accrued rights and nothing else.

The meaning could have been even plainer had the word "accrued" been used and had the directive been drafted since *Barber v Royal Exchange Group Assurance* (Case C-262/88) (1990) ICR 616. *Ten Oever v Stichting Bedrijfspensioenfonds voor het Glazenwassers- en Schoonmaakbedrijf* (Case C-104/90) (1992) ICR 743 and *Colson Pension Trustees Ltd v Russell* (Case 200/91) (1993) ICR 179 no doubt "accrued" would have been used.

His Lordship bore in mind what the European Court of Justice had said in *CLFT v [Italian] Ministry of Health* (Case 263/81) (1982) ECR 3415, 3430 as to the need to interpret such provisions with regard to the state of Community law, not at the date when a directive was enacted, but when it fell to be applied.

His Lordship's view of the directive did leave a gap but its language compelled him to conclude that the European Council must have recognised, and accepted that gap, hence there was no inconsistency between the directive and regulation 7 of the

1981 Regulations.

When national legislation was intended to implement Community law, the national court would be predisposed to find such intention had been achieved: see *Duke v Reliance Systems* (1988) AC 618, 638 per Lord Templeman.

Mr Langstaff had urged that the matter be referred to the European Court. Although the facts had been established and the issue could be simply formulated, the two most

compelling factors must be (i) the public interest in achieving certainty as soon as possible, and (ii) how clear his view was.

His Lordship declined any detours of infidelity but believed the meaning of article 3 to be so clear that the parties' best prospects of saving time and money lay in a refusal to refer.

Solicitors: Brian Thompson & Partners; Mr Ian Fyfe, Preston; Biddle & Co.

Accountant has no lien over company papers

DTIC (CNC) Ltd v Gary Sargent & Co

Before Mr Michael Crystal, QC [Judgment January 19]

An accountant was not able to exercise a lien for unpaid fees over the accounting records of a company which were required by statute to be kept in specific places for certain periods available for inspection.

Mr Michael Crystal, QC, sitting as a deputy judge of the Chancery Division, so held in a reserved judgment on a notice of motion issued by DTIC (CNC) Ltd seeking an order that Gary Sargent & Co, a firm of accountants, deliver up to it, inter alia, all accounting records owned by DTIC which were in the accountants' possession.

Mr John Machell for DTIC; Mr Richard Handyside for Gary Sargent & Co.

HIS LORDSHIP said that DTIC had retained Gary Sargent & Co as its accountants and during the retention had delivered documents dealing with its business affairs to them.

When the retention ended DTIC asked to have its documents returned but the accountants declined to return them on the ground that they were entitled to a

lien over certain categories of documents for unpaid fees.

The documents in issue were accounting and record documents, specifically (a) sales invoices (b) purchase invoices (c) cheque books (d) paying in books and (e) bank statements.

Those accountants might acquire a lien over books of accounts, files and papers which had come into their possession in the course of their work as well established: *Woodward v Corroy* (1976) QB 884. However, the right to exercise such a lien might not be enforceable in some circumstances.

For example, section 244(2) of the Insolvency Act 1986 made such a lien unenforceable when a company was in administration or liquidation or where a provisional liquidator had been appointed "to the extent that its enforcement would deny possession of any books, papers or other records to the office-holder".

There was a line of authority in relation to solicitors that a solicitor was not able to exercise such a lien over documents when the documents were required by statute to be kept in a specific place: see *In re Capital Fire Insurance Association* (1883) 24 Ch D 408 followed in *In re The Anglo-Maltese Hydraulic Dock Co Ltd* (1883) 54

LJ Ch 730. There appeared to his Lordship to be no real distinction to be made between the position of a solicitor and an accountant in that respect. Therefore the principle laid down by the Court of Appeal in *In re Capital Fire Insurance Association* applied equally to accountants and solicitors.

Section 231 of the Companies Act 1985, as amended by section 2 of the Companies Act 1989, imposed a duty on a company to keep accounting records. Section 222 specified where and for how long the records were to be kept. Those were important provisions of the 1985 Act for which there was a criminal sanction if they were not complied with.

Mandatory duties were imposed on officers of the company to keep the records where they were open for inspection. In those circumstances, the documents within section 221 fell squarely within the principle in *In re Capital Fire Insurance Association*.

Accordingly, each of the category of documents (a) to (e) should be delivered up to DTIC. The accountants could not lawfully retain a lien over them.

Solicitors: Dawkins, Wisbech; Clarkson Wright & Jakes, Orpington.

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CARD TODAY**

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2 FOR 1 VIRGIN FLIGHTS - SEE PAGE 6

صكزامن الاصل

contest

Real runners deserve chance of lottery gold

Forget *Chariots of Fire*, the inspiration of the gold medal hopefuls these days is more likely to be Scratchards of Fire. "We are going for gold," declared the National Lottery Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, this week. "We want to help the stars of the future." She was announcing that National Lottery grants worth thousands of pounds could be given to help competitors to train, coach and compete in all sports — from the youngest of promise to the champion in the Olympics.

It is a fine idea, for though sport has benefited by more than £170 million in the first year of the lottery, the grants have been spent on building or improving facilities.

Now grants can be paid directly to individuals to help them to fulfil their potential. But the real test for the fairy godmothers who hand out the lottery gold (in this case the sports councils) will be to make sure it goes to the deserving Cinderellas and not the Ugly Sisters already bloated with sponsorship and appearance money.

Real deserving cases should not be hard to find, for they are the true heirs of the now seemingly time-warped amateur ethos that so preoccupied the founding fathers of much

of British sport. In what was really a class division, sport was carved up a century and more ago into gentlemen and players. These days, the heirs to the lofty idealism of the amateur tradition are left to get by as best they can.

Mostly that means relying on the biggest army of hidden sponsors in the land — their families — who often provide money, equipment, transport and sometimes even coaching up to international level.

There is no better example of an unsung, under-resourced and literally grassroots sport than cross-country running. This Saturday afternoon, thousands of real runners (not your lycra-clad posers who marathon only for the cameras) will slog their way through mud, grass, woods and ditches in cross-country's area championships.

The cross-country season has been a fiercely competitive feature of British athletics for more than a century and traditionally helps to account for our strength in depth at distance running. The list of British record-holders and medal-winners who have shivered their winters running on grim cross-country courses is legendary. Walter George, Sydney Windereson, Gordon Pirie,

There is no better example of an unsung, under-resourced and literally grassroots sport than cross-country running. This Saturday afternoon, thousands of real runners (not your lycra-clad posers who marathon only for the cameras) will slog their way through mud, grass, woods and ditches in cross-country's area championships.

"There is no better example of an unsung sport"



The climax of this season will take place on March 23 at the world cross-country championships in Cape Town, and despite a lamentable lack of resources there is a real chance that the British teams can get among the medals. Since Dave Clarke, one of the finest cross-country runners produced by Britain, took over as men's team manager a little more than a year ago, the British squad has found the spirit to take on the world. Clarke has confidence and enthusiasm. What he and his squad do not have is money.

"Big sums aren't necessarily going to make our athletes run any better," he says, "but a little would go a very long way and buy a lot of recognition and goodwill. What we really need funding for is a British endurance squad — to get the most out of our great distance running tradition."

Clarke is trying to match his team against the best in the world with little more than a token budget. He has the problem of asking some of his best prospects to pass up paid appearances in favour of running for their country virtually at their own expense. "We're asking some athletes, particularly the young ones, to run for Britain with an overdraft hanging round their necks," he says.

"The British squad has the spirit to take on the world"

"We can beat plenty in Cape Town, including the top European teams. If we can get our best runners to turn out there. We have men like Paul Evans and Rob Denmark — and we need them. If our distance runners can get a taste of success in South Africa, we can follow it with success in the summer at the Olympics. If the public want to see our distance men and women winning medals on the track, they must realise that the runners need some encouragement to do the groundwork through the British winter."

Thanks to the changes in the National Lottery awards, some badly-needed support could be channelled into this Cinderella sport. What Walter Rye would have made of such grants we can only guess. In 1876, the press was full of rumours that Rye was about to resign because there had been some gambling over cards in the dressing-room of the Thames Hare and Hounds.

The row passed and he did not quit after all, so perhaps a century and more later he would have smiled at lottery money coming to the aid of his beloved paper-chasing. But I wouldn't bet on it.

JOHN BRYANT

Business trip east marks start of European venture

OF ALL the places in which the PGA European Tour could open its proceedings this year, a tropical island near the Equator where inflation is running at 15 per cent annually is about the oddest. Singapore, 6,500 miles from London, is not the first place that comes to mind when one thinks of Europe.

Golf, however, is a business and as Johnnie Walker pumps £11 million annually into golf, making it the biggest sponsor in Europe and probably the world, it is appropriate that one of its tournaments starts the year — at the Tanah Merah Country Club here this morning.

Greg Norman, Fred Couples, the defending champion, and Ernie Els have all been lured to this island that is smaller in size than Greater London — and it has taken more than a couple of bottles of Black Label to get that you can be sure. No sooner had Norman arrived than he went down with a chest infection and was said to be an extremely doubtful starter.

It is fun being a golf supporter these days. The four annual major championships remain compelling watching, each offering an individual challenge for the professionals as they have done every year



John Hopkins in Singapore on the gripping contest launched by the Johnnie Walker Classic

since the US PGA became a legitimate major championship 40 years ago. They have not been devalued by the rise of extravaganzas with huge financial purses at either end of the season. The Masters in April, the US Open in June, the Open a month later and the US PGA in August are as much the central features of the golfing year as spring, summer, autumn and winter are of the calendar year.

Good as that is, that is not all. These days, the rise in the standards of golf outside the United States means that it has become more of a worldwide game and competitions between teams from Europe and the United States are even more exciting than the one-sided affairs they used to be. In 1985, for example, the golf-watchers who supported Europe could have been sated by the excitement and diversity of what was on offer. There is every reason to expect 1996 to be almost as exciting.

The Ryder Cup started the levelling-up of standards between the two continents and

the thrilling affair at Oak Hill, Rochester, in September was possibly the best yet and arguably the sporting — not just the golfing — event of last year. The teaming rain did nothing to diminish the excitement of Great Britain and Ireland's victory in the Walker Cup the same month. That meant that these two trophies joined the Curtis Cup on this side of the Atlantic.

There is a pleasing symmetry to the golfing calendar at present. One that is a lesson to other sports where one important event clashes with another and the end result is a lessening in importance of them all. The seemingly endless succession of strokeplay events among the professionals and leading amateurs are now punctuated by two matchplay events each year. Last year, it was the men who competed for the Ryder and Walker Cups. This year, it is the turn of the women — the amateurs of Great Britain and Ireland attempting to retain the Curtis Cup at Killarney in June and the women professionals from Europe hoping to regain the Solheim Cup at St Pierre in September.

Here and there are other pleasing events: the eccentric President's Putter, as doddily hazy as swimming in the Serpentine on Christmas Day; the Amateur Championship, this year to be held at Turnberry; the Halford Hewitt, that masterpiece of organisation that takes place each Easter and is regarded by its participants as being far more important than that small invitational event in Augusta, Georgia, going on at the same time, and the home internationals, as rousing a festival of amateur golf as any.

In April, some real amateur

THE EUROPEAN CARD FOR 1996	
TOUR EVENTS	
Jan 25-28	Johnnie Walker Classic, Singapore
Feb 1-4	Heineken Classic, The Vines, Perth
Feb 8-11	Dimension Data Pro-Am, San City
Feb 15-18	Alfred Dunhill South Africa PGA Championship, Johannesburg
Feb 22-25	FNIS Players Championship, Durban
Feb 29-Mar 3	Cotnam Open, Tarragona
Mar 7-10	Moroccan Open, Agadir
Mar 14-17	Dubai Desert Classic
Mar 21-24	Portuguese Open, Lisbon
Mar 28-31	Madeira Island Open, Madeira
Apr 4-7	Cannes Open, Moulines
Apr 11-14	Turkey Masters, Jerez
May 2-5	Peugeot Spanish Open, Valencia
May 9-12	Benson and Hedges International Open, The Oxfordshire, Thame
May 16-19	Volvo PGA Championship, Wentworth
May 24-27	Deutsche Bank Open, Hamburg
June 4-7	English Open, Forest of Arden
June 11-14	Jersey Open, La Moye
June 18-21	BMW International Open, Munich
June 25-28	Peugeot French Open, Paris
July 2-5	Murphy's Irish Open, Dublin
July 9-12	Scottish Open, Carnoustie
July 16-19	Dutch Open, Hilversum
Aug 2-5	Volvo Scandinavian Masters, Gothenburg
Aug 9-12	Holbe Brucke Open, Uster, Austria
Aug 16-19	Czech Open, Mariánské Lázně
Aug 23-26	Volvo German Open, Stuttgart
Aug 30-Sept 1	British Masters, Collingtree Park
Sept 6-9	Canon European Masters, Crans-sur-Sierre, Switzerland
Sept 13-16	Lancôme Trophy, St-Nom-la-Brette, Paris
Sept 19-22	Loch Lomond world Invitational, Loch Lomond
Sept 26-29	Smurfit European Open, The K Club, Dublin
Oct 6-9	Linde German Masters, Berlin
Oct 13-16	Volvo Masters, Valderrama
THE MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS	
Apr 11-14	US Masters, Augusta
June 13-16	US Open, Oakland Hills, Michigan
July 18-21	Open Championship, Royal Lytham and St Annes
Aug 8-11	US PGA Championship, Louisville, Kentucky



Norman, left, who is a doubtful starter. Couples and Els have all been lured to Singapore

enthusiasts will gather to play 12 holes in one day at Littlestone — and, in 25 years of so doing, only one man has failed to complete the four rounds. "It's easy enough," one of them said recently, "You do two [rounds] before lunch. Then you sit down and have a decent meal, a knife-and-fork job and a glass or two of wine. And then you do two after lunch. I'm not saying it's a piece of cake, but nor am I saying it is that difficult."

You sleep quite well after all that."

Yet just as the start of the PGA European Tour is considered to be as the starting pistol for golf in Europe, so it is the professionals on this tour that demand the greatest attention. Between the start of the first event, the Johnnie Walker Classic in Singapore today, and the end of the final event, the Volvo Masters at Valderrama, Spain, on October 27, the travelling circus of

players will have hit millions of golf balls and visited dozens of countries.

Last year was dominated by the week-by-week struggle between Sam Torrance and Colin Montgomerie, which became as gripping to watch as it must have been exhausting to play. That Montgomerie only won with his final stroke of the season in Europe indicates how close it all was. Would that this year will be as exciting.

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WORD-WATCHING

Answers from page 34

CHERRY BUMS

(a) Under the command of Lord Cardigan, the Charge of the Light Brigade (the 13th Hussars) were charged at the Battle of the Alma on 25 October 1854. The splendour of their magnificent light uniforms, the swiftness of their horses, the lightness of their chestnut-coloured tunics, all these were utterly unfit for war service.

SALT HORSE

(a) Royal naval slang, or jargon, for the salt-petre-dyed blue salt beef in barrels — a standard food for sailors in Nelson's navy.

LORD LOOKON

(b) The surname nickname for Lord Lucan, the Cavalry Commander during the Crimean War. A hot temper, really, Lord Lucan, the Commander-in-Chief, had him self ordered the execution of keeping the cavalry in a hand-to-hand. Lucan, though, was not completely forbidden in charge into action. Except when Lucan ordered him to instruct the misdirected and disastrous charge of the Light Brigade.

LORD LOOKON

(a) The horse, of a shield on a plant, the red-tinted centre of a round shield. Demosthenes, that great Greek orator, used even a shield at the Battle of Marathon, circa 490 BC.

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

1. Bxh3! 2. Bxh3! 3. Bxh3! 4. Bxh3! 5. Bxh3! 6. Bxh3! 7. Bxh3! 8. Bxh3! 9. Bxh3! 10. Bxh3! 11. Bxh3! 12. Bxh3! 13. Bxh3! 14. Bxh3! 15. Bxh3! 16. Bxh3! 17. Bxh3! 18. Bxh3! 19. Bxh3! 20. Bxh3! 21. Bxh3! 22. Bxh3! 23. Bxh3! 24. Bxh3! 25. Bxh3! 26. Bxh3! 27. Bxh3! 28. Bxh3! 29. Bxh3! 30. Bxh3! 31. Bxh3! 32. Bxh3! 33. Bxh3! 34. Bxh3! 35. Bxh3! 36. Bxh3! 37. Bxh3! 38. Bxh3! 39. Bxh3! 40. Bxh3! 41. Bxh3! 42. Bxh3! 43. Bxh3! 44. Bxh3! 45. Bxh3! 46. Bxh3! 47. Bxh3! 48. Bxh3! 49. Bxh3! 50. Bxh3! 51. Bxh3! 52. Bxh3! 53. Bxh3! 54. Bxh3! 55. Bxh3! 56. Bxh3! 57. Bxh3! 58. Bxh3! 59. Bxh3! 60. Bxh3! 61. Bxh3! 62. Bxh3! 63. Bxh3! 64. Bxh3! 65. Bxh3! 66. Bxh3! 67. Bxh3! 68. Bxh3! 69. Bxh3! 70. Bxh3! 71. Bxh3! 72. Bxh3! 73. Bxh3! 74. Bxh3! 75. Bxh3! 76. Bxh3! 77. Bxh3! 78. Bxh3! 79. Bxh3! 80. Bxh3! 81. Bxh3! 82. Bxh3! 83. Bxh3! 84. Bxh3! 85. Bxh3! 86. Bxh3! 87. Bxh3! 88. Bxh3! 89. Bxh3! 90. Bxh3! 91. Bxh3! 92. Bxh3! 93. Bxh3! 94. Bxh3! 95. Bxh3! 96. Bxh3! 97. Bxh3! 98. Bxh3! 99. Bxh3! 100. Bxh3! 101. 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Confessions of the academically challenged

Let us begin with a confession. I have not watched the first round of *University Challenge* (BBC2) with anything approaching my usual dedication and before we go any further I had better explain why. I cannot answer the questions any more.

Over the past few weeks, every time I have dipped in for a quick starter for ten, Jeremy Paxman has asked the sort of question that makes me scry over to Des O'Connor on ITV. An almost audible snore seems to follow: "Too tough for you, huh?" It is.

Now this would be a shameful enough admission for any graduate but it is doubly so for a television critic. For when *University Challenge* returned last year, says Bamber and Aye Jeremy, my how we all scoffed, Aye, peasy, lemon squeezy we all said. They don't make questions like they used to, we all said. And my wasn't it pitiful, we all said, how those

eager little undergraduate eyes lit up every time a question on pop music came along?

Last night I was my once eager, once undergraduate, eyes that waited in vain for a nice question about the Sex Pistols or Spandau Ballet. It never came—the flame of academia, that had once burnt so brightly (well, I always thought so), flickered and went out.

Paxman was merciless. "The play by Aeschylus entitled *Seven Against Thebes* is based on the story of which tragic hero?" Er... "Which aluminium oxide has the gem stone varieties sapphire and ruby, while its mixture with iron oxide and spinel are called emery?" Um... "Which king was buried in Worcester Cathedral after dying of dysentery?" I knew it. I knew it... I didn't. "Which book of the Bible follows Jeremiah and is an account of the prophet's complaint that God had rejected him and his people?" Lamentable, I

thought—apparently out loud. "I'll accept that," said Paxman.

There were other rare moments of encouragement as Middlesex University took on Solihull College, Cambridge. "What does the symbol PH stand for on an Ordnance Survey map?" Now I definitely knew that. The woman reading English at Selwyn, who earlier had impressively known that Drambuie was Gaelic for "pleasing drink", seemed confident too. She pressed her buzzer. "Phone?" Rather meanly, I cheered.

The result of this onerous first round is an egalitarian field that would gladden the heart of even Harriet Harman—two colleges each from Oxford and Cambridge, three "new universities" (aka former polytechnics) and five other well-known establishments of assorted antiquity and brick colour. Middlesex against Selwyn was new against old and

REVIEW

Matthew Bond



produced a thrilling contest that went right down to the gong—and just past it.

I fell to the woman reading herbal medicine at Middlesex, who earlier had beaten the Cambridge biochemist to "cholesterol", to press the final buzzer. With the scores level, Paxman moved to the sudden death tie-break. "1.732 is to 3 decimal points... Buzz." "E," shouted the herbalist.

Students never change, I thought... before, in a dazzling moment of mathematical déjà vu, I realised she meant "e". Nothing to do with drugs, everything to do with natural logarithms—how clever. "Wrong," said Paxman, deducting five points for an incorrect interruption and handing the game to Selwyn. And so it was, that for the square root of three the battle was lost. If I ever start getting the answers right again, I could grow to like this game.

The workings of the brain play a key role in *Hetty Wainthropp Investigates* (BBC1) and it is driving me mad. The cod brass band music I can take, the over-acting I might be able to accept, but Hetty Wainthropp and her "little grey cells"—no way. Borrowing one fictional detective's catchphrase to raise the supposed credibility of another, and an infinitely inferior one to boot... well, it's very annoying.

Technically this is an accomplished and good-looking production. Last night's episode, for instance, began with Robert Tronson suitably setting the scene for what looked a promising tale of witchcraft and skulduggery. But you don't get sacrificial virgins or naked cavorting in *Hetty Wainthropp*, oh no. You get handbagged.

You get handbagged by the enormous performance that Patricia Routledge gives in the title role. It may have succeeded in consigning Hyacinth Bucket to history but it leaves the supporting cast with a bleak choice: over-act or disappear. Understandably, most choose the former, turning each episode into a succession of music-hall turns that makes me long for the delicate touch of the equally implausible but far more enjoyable *Pie in the Sky*.

Hetty Wainthropp, who dis-

penses platitudes and homilies with careless abandon, doesn't hold with despair: "Not for young or old." Well, maybe not, but after four episodes I'm coming close.

I began with a confession, so let me finish with some advice. Just watch the first 20 minutes of *Hollywood Mea* (ITV) and then switch over. For, after two episodes, a pattern has emerged—the first 20 minutes are meticulously assembled, highly entertaining, highly understated television—*tabulous*. Then something happens—the pace slows, the stars fade... and suddenly you find yourself considering, for the second week running, mutilations of the male organ. Last week it was penis enlargement, this week it was penis-ectomy and John Wayne Bobbitt, now carving out a new career as a porn star. Life is too short—but I expect some Beverly Hills plastic surgeon is working on that, too.

- BBC1**
- 6.00am Business Breakfast (14019)
7.00 BBC Breakfast News (2635632)
9.10 Kilroy (s) (717293)
10.00 News (Ceefax), regional news and weather (642408) 10.05 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (s) (691838)
10.30 Good Morning (s) (11854)
12.00 News (Ceefax) (6054361)
12.05pm Pabli Mill Special about the show A Little Night Music (292767) 12.50 Regional News (1397922)
1.00 One O'Clock News (Ceefax) and weather (48477)
1.30 Neighbours (Ceefax) (s) (6408748)
1.50 The Flying Doctors (Ceefax) (s) (112422) 2.35 This Is Your Life (s) (Ceefax) (s) (421025) 3.05 Timekeepers (s) (542477)
3.30 The New York Bear Show (s) (727280)
3.35 The Morph Files (s) (724554)
3.50 Peter and the Pirates (s) (Ceefax) (s) (173212) 4.10 Highlander (Ceefax) (s) (381076) 4.35 The Really Wild Show (Ceefax) (s) (678477)
5.00 Newsround (Ceefax) (115598)
5.10 Orange Hill (Ceefax) (s) (739090)
5.35 Neighbours (s) (Ceefax) (s) (344583) NLL: 5.35 Inside Usher
6.00 News (Ceefax) and weather (941)
6.30 Regional News Magazine (293) NLL: 6.30 Neighbours 6.57 Inside Usher News
7.00 Top of the Pops (Ceefax) (s) (6518)
7.30 EastEnders. Pauline takes on the council, and Roy arranges to meet Frank (Ceefax) (s) (477)
8.00 The Vet. Out of the Past. Drama series about a Devon veterinary practice. With Suzanne Burden and Richard Hawley (Ceefax) (s) (64354)
8.50 Animal Hospital. Heroes. Roll Hams remembers some of the heart-warming stories from past visits to the Harroworth Hospital in London (Ceefax) (s) (701380)
9.00 Nine O'Clock News (Ceefax), regional news and weather (935)
9.30 French (Ceefax) (s) (4822)
10.00 Crimewatch UK. Presented by Nick Ross and Jill Dando (Ceefax) (s) (718108)
10.45 Question Time. With MPs Virginia Bottomley, Simon Hughes and Clare Short and Judge Stephen Timmins (Ceefax) (s) (536651) NLL: 10.45 Spotlight 11.15 Question Time 12.15pm Crimewatch Update 12.25pm Hunger for Faith 12.45 Film: Cop for the King 2.15 Weather (WALLS) 10.45 The State (576019) 11.15 Question Time (533564) 12.15pm Crimewatch Update (574413) 12.25pm Hunger for Faith (277022) 12.45pm Bowls (996259) 1.25 News (4234848)
11.45 Crimewatch UK Update (Ceefax) (s) (744019)
11.55 Hunger for Faith. The writer Rana Kabbani discovers the heart and soul of British Islam (1/4) (Ceefax) (s) (497699)
12.15 Film: Sound of Love (1978) with John Jarrett and Celia de Burgh. A writer and a motor mechanic are drawn together by their experiences in a clinic for the deaf. Directed by John Power (717317)
1.35 Weather (202852)

- BBC2**
- 6.00am Business and Work (98831)
7.00 Breakfast News (Ceefax) (6015787)
7.15 Lancelotti (s) (3139545) 7.40 Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles (s) (7113800) 8.05 Blue Peter (s) (s) (5246818)
8.35 The Record (s) (9420651) 9.00 For the Love of It (5370861)
9.05 Daytime on Two: Science (4020816)
9.25 Lancelotti (s) (3174748) 9.45 Over the Moon (3162809) 10.00 Playdays (8617851) 10.25 Storyline (717535)
10.45 Science Zone (4123212) 11.05 Space Ark (9248019) 11.15 Sex Education (3976598) 11.35 Landmarks (2440338) 12.00 Christianity (3942854)
12.15 Clermen (4355599) 12.30pm Working Lunch (1600) 1.00 Lancelotti (3276453) 1.25 Technology (2822308) 1.40 Numberline (64071670)
2.00 Tales of the Tooth Fairies (s) (61257212) 2.05 Puppypod: Tales (s) (6125653)
2.10 The Andrew Neil Show (s) (5380800) WALS: 2.10-3.00 Bowls (5390800) 4.00-6.00 Bowls (7545)
3.00 News (Ceefax) Westminster (7183564) 3.55 News (Ceefax) (5148187)
4.00 Today's the Day (s) (108) 4.30 Ready, Steady, Cook (s) (380) 5.00 The Oprah Winfrey Show (s) (7731584)
5.40 98.8 In Business (140854)
5.45 My Village (726229)
6.00 Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (Ceefax) (s) (788922) 6.45 The Who Dares (s) (389477)
7.00 Waiting for God. Retirement home comedy (s) (Ceefax) (s) (8038) WALS: 7.00 Pound for Pound
7.30 First Sight: Back to Plague Us. How the health authorities in New York have managed to curb a large tuberculosis epidemic (449) NORTHERN IRELAND: 7.30 Now You're Talking 7.35 Our Evening Reporter: WALS: 7.30 What's Happened to the Ugly Lady? EAST: 7.30 Matter of Fact; MIDLANDS: 7.30 Midlands Reporter; NORTH, NORTH EAST, NORTH WEST: 7.30 Close Up North; SOUTH: 7.30 Southern Eye; SOUTH WEST, WEST: 7.30 Close Up

- CHOICE**
- Survival: Stone Runner**
ITV, 7.30pm
The stone curlew chooses to nest in open country, exposed to danger from both man and fellow birds, its decline is not surprising. In the 1930s there were some 1,000 pairs nesting in Britain. Now there are only 150. The good news is that the decline has been arrested and even slightly reversed. Nobody has done more to ensure the bird's survival than Chris Knights, who is both a farmer, with 2,000 acres in Norfolk, and a distinguished wildlife cameraman. As a farmer he has to protect his land from tractors, foxes and sheep. As a filmmaker he records the curlew's annual arrival in Britain from warmer climes, the cycle of mating and breeding and the autumn departure. His footage provides an engaging record of a rare species.
- Traces of Guilt: Dead Witness**
BBC2, 9.00pm
The forensic science series moves to Guatemala, where the challenge for the experts is to uncover the truth about killings which took place 12 years before. The location is a small hillside village where more than 100 people lie in mass graves. The official version is that they were victims of the civil war between the military Government and left-wing guerrillas. Surviving villagers allege genocide. Bones and bullets are all the team have to go on, as the project takes on the character of an archaeological dig. But bones can reveal how people died and bullets are a clue to the guns used. Dr Clyde Snow, who leads the team, says that history is usually written by the victors. Here it is written by science, though the conclusions are not welcome to the current regime.
- Thief Takers**
ITV, 9.00pm
Television's newest police series has strong echoes of an old one and not just because Ten Clegg, who directs this episode of *Thief Takers*, directed the same function more than 20 years ago on the pilot for *The Sweeney*. Where *The Sweeney* was a John Thaw-Dennis Waterman double act, *Thief Takers* has an ensemble cast but otherwise the similarities are more striking than the differences. Both shows feature Scotland Yard's Flying Squad, a tough and cynical bunch whose behaviour is often little better than that of the villains they are chasing. Both shows, too, feature sex and violence. The opening plot links a prison escape, a security van hijack and a detective who is having an affair with a villain's wife. It has most of *The Sweeney* ingredients except one: a sense of humour.

- HTV**
- 6.00am GMTV (2575564)
9.25 Win, Lose or Draw (s) (4028458)
9.55 Regional News (Teletext) (821800)
10.00 The Time... the Place (1775498)
10.35 This Morning (5716106)
12.20pm Regional News (Teletext) (6050545)
12.30 News and weather (Teletext) (534767)
12.55 Shortland Street (s) (5333361)
1.20 Coronation Street (s) (Teletext) (3725232)
1.50 Home and Away (Teletext) (7882632)
2.20 Chain Letters, Word Game (Teletext) (s) (1876551)
2.50 Vanessa (Teletext) (4201477)
3.20 News (Teletext) (2948651)
3.25 Regional News (Teletext) (2945822)
3.30 The Riddlers (2776309) 3.40 Wizard (s) (s) (3750632) 3.55 Rupert (3779629) 4.20 Mike and Angelo (s) (6115457) 4.45 Rebel (s) (Teletext) (s) (6717759)
5.10 A Country Practice. Medical drama set in the Australian outback (s) (8824632)
5.40 News and weather (Teletext) (601006)
6.00 Home and Away. Selma accuses Damien of being cynical and selfish and Shannon discovers why Fisher wants to transfer below-average students (s) (Teletext) (237800)
6.25 HTV News (173780)
7.00 Emmerdale. Terry and Viv trip the light fantastic (Teletext) (5554)
7.30 **Survival: Stone Runner**. Saving the stone curlew (Teletext) (s) (545)
8.00 The Bill: Worst Fears. While Denon investigates the kidnapping of a five-year-old boy, Conway gets some unsettling news (Teletext) (4212)
8.30 Police and Two-Two Taking Bricks. A police raid is shown trying to combat the high drug-related crime rate plaguing Chapeltown in West Yorkshire (Teletext) (s) (4449)
9.00 **The Flying Squad** is back (9.00pm)
9.00 **Thief Takers: No One Likes to See Them** (Teletext) (8000)
10.00 News at Ten and weather (Teletext) (21212) 10.30 Regional News (Teletext) (500816)
10.40 Film: **Extreme Prejudice** (1987). Drugs-busting thriller with an excess of violence, starring Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe and Michael Ironside. Directed by Walter Hill (Teletext) (s) (64594187)
12.40 Not Fade Away: John Altman. His music video choice (s) (4735012)
1.40 Shift (4308152)
1.35 Gill Ar Gam (s) (708582)
1.35 Late Night Romantics (s) (s) (136201)
2.00 The Time... the Place (s) (1775498)
2.00 The New Mrs Show (s) (20688)
5.30 Morning News (48997)

- WALS**
- As HTV West except:**
6.25pm-7.00 Wales Tonight (579093)
7.30-8.00 Swansea Festival (545)
WESTCOUNTRY
As HTV West except:
12.25-12.30 My Story (6088584)
12.55 Chain Letters (6449458)
1.25 Emmerdale (32791903)
1.55-2.25 Home and Away (78821903)
2.25 Vanessa (1876822)
2.55-3.20 A Country Practice (1435699)
5.10-5.40 Home and Away (6824632)
6.00-7.00 Westcountry News (36545)
CENTRAL
As HTV West except:
12.25 Home and Away (6349458)
1.25 Chain Letters (32791903)
1.55 A Country Practice (64054903)
2.20 Vanessa (18767551)
2.50-3.20 High Road (4201477)
5.10-5.40 Shortland Street (6824632)
6.25-7.00 Central News and Weather (575903)
12.40am Live from the Llydrome (6440807)
2.35 Shift (7115997)
3.30 The Crime Hour with John Stalker and Mary Nightingale (1307930)
4.25 Jobfinder (5508065)
5.20 Aston Eye (3407404)
MERIDIAN
As HTV West except:
12.25pm-1.25 Chain Letters (6349458)
1.25 Home and Away (32791903)
2.20 Vanessa (18767551)
2.50-3.20 Behind the Scenes with Penelope Keith (4201477)
5.10 Home and Away (6824632)
6.00 Meridian Tonight (309)
6.30-7.00 Getaway (361)
5.00am Freeview (20888)
SAC
7.00 The Big Breakfast (58800)
9.00 Fifteen to One (43201)
9.30 Schools
12.00 House to House (21125)
12.30pm Hullebelloo (50498)
1.00 Slot Melthrin (31187)
1.30 Film: Billy the Kid (13689458)
1.55 Ricki Lake (5549767)
4.00 Backstage (274)
4.30 Travelog (458)
5.00 5 Pump Used 5 (6670)
5.30 Countdown (598)
6.00 Newyddion 6 News (798670)
6.15 Heno (224767)
7.00 Pobol Y Cwm (628038)
7.25 Pwy Di Pwy? (889941)
8.00 Y Farch Drws Nesa (2854)
8.30 Newyddion 6 News (1381)
9.00 Or Gaton (2698)
9.00 Caru Ar Y Tell (2698)
9.30 Mewn Deg (36332)
10.00 Ffili (183554)
10.35 Gill Ar Gam (418361)
11.00 Tio Bu Dao (4816)
11.30 A Oes Cariad? (13293)
12.00am Diepethes (265317)
S

- SATV**
- 6.35am Think Tank with Mackey Hutton (s) (Teletext) (s) (5655729)
7.00 The Big Breakfast (58800)
9.00 Fifteen to One (s) (Teletext) (s) (43201)
9.30 Schools: Middle English (3169616) 9.45 Pica and People (1501767) 10.05 Scientific Eye (1325125) 10.25 Geographical Eye Over Britain (7160903) 10.45 Quest (1790729) 11.00 History in Action: Hypotheticals (7894151) 11.20 Riff (s) (841293) 11.30 The German Programme (5180212)
12.00 House to House (21125)
12.30pm Sesame Street with Carol Channing, Kevin Kline and Phoebe Cates (33651) 1.30 Hullebelloo (s) (s) (58767)
2.00 Seans and Comics (66403583)
2.10 Film: The Easy Way (1952, b/w) starring Cary Grant and Betsy Drake as a couple with three children of their own who become foster parents to two other youngsters. Directed by Norman Taurog (29588)
4.00 Backstage (Teletext) (s) (274)
4.30 Countdown (Teletext) (s) (458)
5.00 Ricki Lake: You Got the Job Because You Are Black (s) (7989854)
5.45 Terrytoons (134283)
6.00 Home Improvement: Dollars and Sense. American comedy series. (Teletext) (s) (851)
6.30 Newyddion 6 (s) (903)
7.00 Channel 4 News and weather (Teletext) (97732) 7.30 The Bill (585800)
8.00 The Pulse. Shrinaz Pakwan reports on intable bowel syndrome. (Teletext) (s) (2854)
8.30 A Taste of the Caribbean: Curaçao. Dorenda Heiner visits the former Dutch colony. (Teletext) (s) (1381)
9.00 In Advance of the Landing. A journey into the bizarre world of stargazers, space savants and new branches of pseudoscience in America, meeting outer space devotees preparing for the arrival of aliens (s) (Teletext) (s) (3670)
10.00 **NYPD Blue: ER** (Teletext) (s) (44922)
10.55 Whose Line Is It Anyway? (s) (Teletext) (s) (434309)
11.25 Just for Laughs (388803)
12.00am Diepethes (s) (2847317)
1.35 Rebellion of the Hanged. Set in Mexico in 1909, this is the story of a drunk who gambled his way through a fortune. In Spanish with English subtitles (s) (448048)
3.00 Film: Backlash (1986) starring David Arca as a racist policeman who, with probationer constable Gla Carides, is assigned to take a young Aboriginal from Sydney to the small outback town where she is to stand trial for murder. Directed by Bill Bennett (163997). Ends at 4.35

SKY NEWS

For more comprehensive listings of satellite and cable channels, see the Vision supplement, published Saturday

SKY ONE

7.00am The DJ Set Show (94485) 8.30 Piers Fennell's 11.00am Court TV (51767) 8.30 The Oprah Winfrey Show (42929) 10.30pm Concentration (50651) 11.00 Sky 12.30pm Responder (2547) 12.00pm Murphy Brown (76274) 12.30pm The Doctors (74729) 2.00pm News (457018) 3.00pm Court TV (1703) 3.30pm The Oprah Winfrey Show (2810719) 4.15pm Action (458724) 5.00pm Star Trek: The Next Generation (5555) 6.00pm The Simpsons (9274) 6.30pm Jeopardy! (3534) 7.00pm LAPD (4212) 7.30pm L.A. Live (5528) 8.00pm Valley of the Ancients (3712) 8.30pm The Next Generation (9274) 9.00pm Star Trek: The Next Generation (9274) 10.00pm Law and Order (34870) 10.30pm Late Show with David Letterman (480622) 11.00pm CBS Evening News (6941) 11.30pm News (59713) 12.00am Hit Me Long Play

SKY NEWS

News on the hour

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SKY NEWS

News on the hour

8.00am Sunrise (5874

THURSDAY JANUARY 25 1996

Rowell summons teenaged wing

English rugby trains eyes on future talent

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

ALL season, Jack Rowell, the manager of the England rugby union team, has bemoaned the lack of young talent worthy of consideration for his national squad. Yesterday, he did something about it, by calling a teenager from his school books in Yorkshire to join training this weekend in preparation for the five nations' championship match against Wales on February 3.

Paul Sampson, from Woodhouse Grove School, near Bradford, will not play at Twickenham, but the mere fact that he will mingle with such as Carling, Guscott and Underwood, faces familiar only from the television screen, confirms the mood-swing in the management. This season, the squad has already been decorated by the youthful looks of Andy Gomarsall, 21. Now he is joined by Alex King, 20, and Sampson, a mere 18.

This is all part of the familiarisation programme that Rowell, in concert with John Elliott, the Rugby Football Union's development officer, seeks to put in place. The ambition is to bring on young talent and introduce it to the international environment, at times despite the leading clubs, whose selections tend towards the conservative.

Rowell has been envious that France could introduce two 20-year-olds, Thomas Castaignède and the controversial Richard Dourthe, against, of all opponents, New Zealand last autumn. Australia's ability to produce young stars — Tim Horan and Jason Little were 19 when they made their international debuts — is also well-documented. Last week, Wales gave Leigh Davies, 19, his head against Italy, and another 19-year-old, Jonah Lomu, played for the All Blacks against France in 1994.

"There is an excitement in reaching so far down the supply chain," Rowell said. "The hope is that, when Sampson develops and returns to the international squad, he will not be overawed. England are always looking for young players with potential. The

Richard Dourthe, the France centre, has been banned by the French Rugby Federation for two five nations' championship matches for stamping on the head of Ben Clarke, the England No 8, during the game in Paris last weekend.

challenge is there for the many good club players around England: are you good enough to play international rugby successfully?"

Sampson is one of nine players added to the squad beaten 15-12 by France in Paris last weekend and earns his place thanks to his six appearances last season in the England 18-group schools team and glowing reports from Nigel Melville, his mentor at Otley, where he plays his rugby out of term.

"He not only has excellent

pace but he has good vision, can tackle superbly and place-kick — he is the complete player," Melville, himself a teenager in the England squad of 1979, said. "We've been playing him on the wing to give him a bit of experience, but I think it is full back which will allow him to have more options."

Sampson started the 1995 representative schools season at full back and finished on the right wing. As a wing, he occupies a position where England have wrestled all season: Rory Underwood, at 32, is nearing the end of a distinguished career, his brother, Tony, is recovering from a knee operation, and Damian Hopley — a centre — was pressed into service on the wing before the advent last Saturday of Jon Sleightholme.

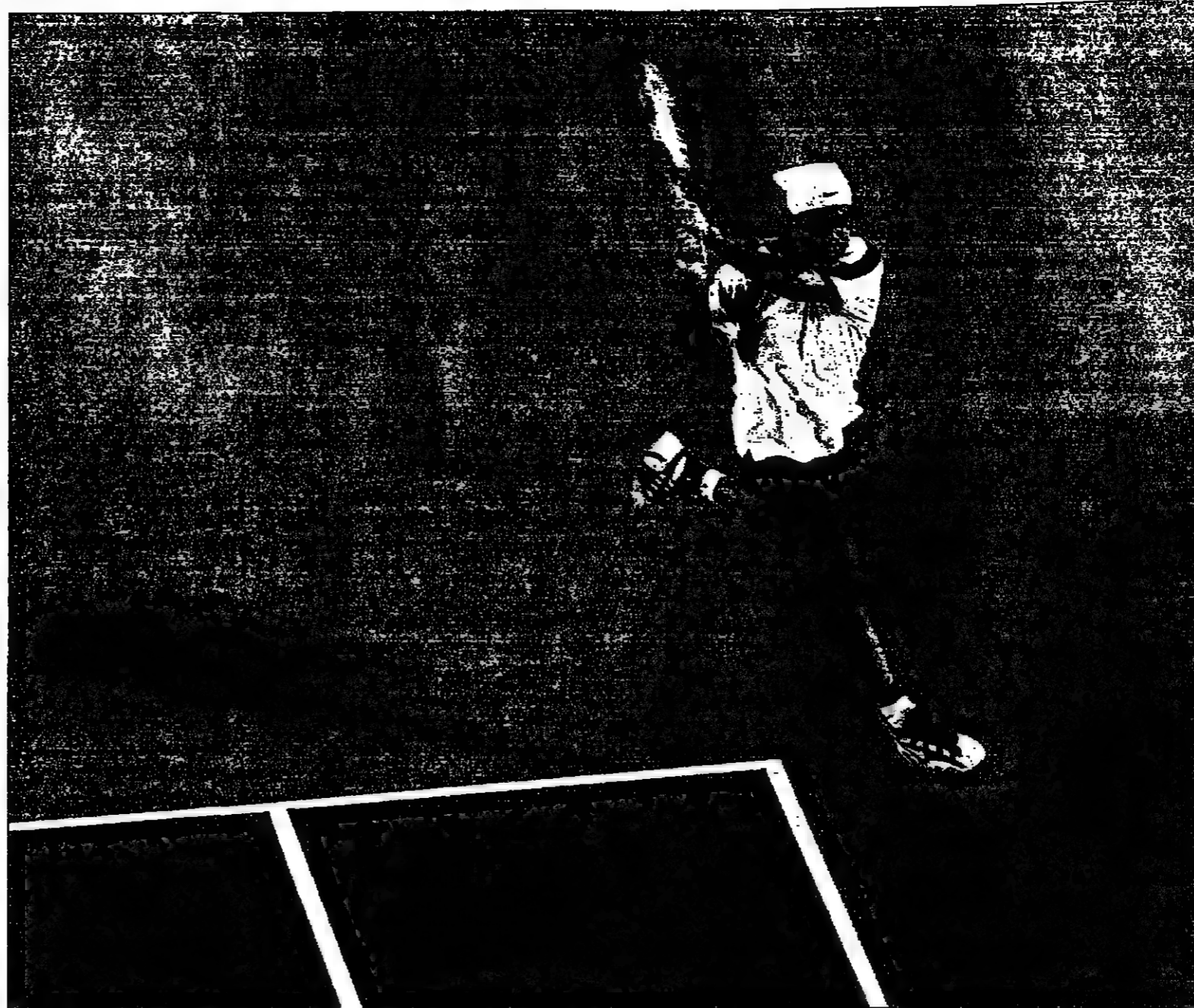
Rory Underwood, in 1984, and Kevin Simms, a forerunner after his twentieth birthday in 1985, have been England's youngest caps of late.

"I'm delighted they have recognised it can be a young man's game," Geoff Wappett, the England schools coach, said. "One of the things which came out loud and clear from last year's World Cup was that there are opportunities for young men, and we are no different to any of the others. Some of our young men can make it."

The management spent the best part of four hours analysing video of the defeat by France before settling on their training squad and the A XV to play New South Wales at Leicester on January 31. All members of the match party of 21 in Paris are retained, while five of the backs who contributed towards a 25-15 victory in the A international with France, plus Tony Diprose of the forwards, are added.

England's training squad includes: J. Callard (Bath), M. Carr (Bath), A. Adenayo (Bath), J. Sleightholme (Bath), D. Hopley (Worcester), P. Sampson (Oxford), J. Wood (Leicester), W. Gearing (Leicester), P. de Glencville (Bath), W. Greenwood (Leicester), J. Guscott (Bath), P. Gwynne (Northampton), A. King (Bristol University), K. Bracken (Bristol), M. Dawson (Northampton), A. Gomersall (Worcester), J. Edwards (Leicester), J. Leonard (Leicester), G. Romrose (Leicester), U. Ubbu (Bath), G. Dowe (Bath), M. Heaton (Bristol), M. Bayfield (Northampton), M. Johnson (Leicester), L. Dallaglio (Worcester), S. Omondi (Bath), A. Robinson (Bath), R. Borthwick (Northampton), S. Clarke (Gloucester), A. Diprose (Saracens), D. Richards (Leicester).

ENGLAND A (v New South Wales): T. Simpson (West Hartlepool), P. Hall (Bristol), A. Syme (West Hartlepool), W. Greenwood (Hartlepool), A. Adenayo (Bath), A. King (Bristol University), A. Healey (Oxford), R. Hargrave (Leicester), R. Coady (Leicester), D. Gifford (Leicester), M. Gony (Bristol), G. Archer (Bristol), J. Fowler (Salisbury), R. Hill (Gloucester), A. Diprose (Saracens), captain, R. Repachetti (Leicester), R. Lacey (Gloucester), K. Yates (Bath), P. Greenwood (Gloucester), G. Sheehy (Leicester).



Agassi hits a powerful backhand return during his dramatic five-set victory over Courier yesterday. Photograph: Julian Herbert

Resolute Agassi proves irresistible

FROM STUART JONES
TENNIS CORRESPONDENT
IN MELBOURNE

THE elements played tricks throughout the longest of quarter-final days at the Australian Open. A violent wind blew through the first match, a storm erupted midway through the second and the last three had to be staged indoors under the sliding roof. To cope with the conditions, serenity and conviction were required. Some were not up to the task.

Martina Hingis has yet to develop such qualities. Conchita Martínez will find any excuse. Yevgeny Kafelnikov was never mentally attuned. Nor was Thomas Enqvist. Of the losers, therefore, only Jim Courier was properly equipped, but he ran into a tempest of such force that he could not resist it.

Courier, twice a champion here, not only took the opening two sets, as he had at the same stage against Pete Sampras a year ago, but was also a break up at the start of the third. He had forced Andre Agassi into a position where, as he later reflected, he "didn't have too many options".

The holder's response, which restored him to No 1 in the world ranking, may not have been "a miracle" as he claimed, but it qualified as extraordinary. He gathered such momentum during his first ever recovery from a two-set deficit that Courier was on the verge of yielding the fifth to love.

"I don't think he has ever come on that strongly," Courier said, "and that was the best I've played in the tournament." Better, in other words, than his own revivals against Todd Woodbridge and Marcos Ondruska, both of whom had been 2-1 ahead in sets in the previous two rounds.

Agassi's 6-7, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 victory means that he has now come from behind four times. He has played well in patches and, even if the closing three sets against Courier were adorned in a richest purple, it is as though he has been motivated only by the revelation that his title has been about to be taken from him.

He is unlikely to be short of inspiration in the semi-final. He faces Michael Chang, whom he has witheringly dismissed as a player who "runs for a living". Nor was he

complimentary when, though injured, he joined his American colleagues in Moscow for the Davis Cup final last month. The absent Chang was lambasted. "He hasn't played since 1990," Agassi said. "That shows his level of interest. Everybody else is committed except him."

Courier would not be drawn into the domestic, one-sided

Flinders Park results 39

verbal warfare. However, he did suggest that Agassi, a rival he had beaten every time since the French Open final of 1991, holds the edge in spite of the conspicuous ease with which Chang has progressed. He has yet to drop a set, but "he hasn't played anybody of Andre's calibre and, the way Andre's hitting the ball, he [Chang] is going to have to play very, very well to beat him."

Kafelnikov looked even further and predicted that, as long as the event stays indoors, Boris Becker will regain the title he held five years ago. However, Kafelnikov's prophesies should be regarded as dubious. After the fourth round, he forecast that he, himself, would be the champion, a notion ridiculed by Becker on court and decided off it. Nor was that the immature Russian's only offering adjudged to have been ill-considered.

His reaction to a favourable call, which gave him a 5-1 lead in the second set tie-break, was to blow a kiss to the line judge. "That was not very clever," Becker observed. As retribution, Kafelnikov was allowed a game of the third set.

Becker rated his performance as one of his top three in Australia. He struck 28 aces, but Mark Woodford, his opponent in the semi-finals, the first home representative in the last four since Pat Cash in 1988, has been

skilfully turning to his own advantage the power of opponents such as Mark Philippoussis and the flustered Enqvist.

Martinez lost her footing shortly after the roof had been closed and scraped the skin off her racket hand. Inexplicably, she did not seek treatment until she had conceded the second set to Anke Huber and effectively the match by dropping the first three games of the third.

The comparatively inexperienced Hingis earlier lost patience with the ceaseless retrieving of the diminutive Amanda Coetzer and with the swirling wind. The 15-year-old was plainly unaware of the common saying here. "If you don't like the weather in Melbourne, stick around for five minutes."

MORSE

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Brentford craving is hard cheese for Cup opponents

By ALYSON FORD

MATCH of the Day should substitute Della Smith and Keith Floyd for Gary Lineker and Alan Hansen Saturday. The Valley, home of Charlton Athletic, will be awash with dairy products as the cheese-bearing hordes of Brentford descend upon that corner of South London for their team's FA Cup fourth-round tie.

Members of the Brentford Official Supporters' Posse have hired a boat to carry their 80-strong party and their stash of edam, stilton and Daifylea — plus crackers — from New Pier to the Thames Barrier. They will gorge on cheddar and bunge on gouda en route, during the match and afterwards as part of their anticipated celebrations.

One particularly ardent follower has constructed eight 3ft high hats, including a beret depicting two crackers with a cheese filling and a cap featuring a mouse nibbling at a chunk of Gruyere.

There is a proud tradition of bearing bizarre objects to football stadiums. The first rattle was no doubt scoffed at and it took only a few weeks for the inflatable banana to become passé. And who could forget Grimsby Town's bouncing haddock? However,

Brentford have always been at the cutting edge.

Cadbury's Champ bars were banned from Griffin Park after thousands were thrown on to the pitch after a rare league victory three seasons ago. Taking a barge to a match is nothing new, either — at least not for Brentford followers. Billy Grant has been organising alternative travel to away fixtures for the past six years. His most ambitious project was a magical mystery tour, where the surprise factor was diluted for anyone who had read Brentford's fixture-list and saw they were playing at Stoke City.

Brentford, of the Endsleigh

You must be the Brentford fans



Insurance League second division, discovered the power of cheese in December, when they played Bournemouth in the FA Cup first round. When a Tom Jones record came on the jukebox, one supporter stood up and called it "cheesy". The chant "cheese, cheese, cheese" took over the establishment and the landlady showed her gratitude by presenting them with an enormous platter of cheeses.

"It started as a joke and then we won — a clear omen. So at the following Cup game at Norwich, everyone spontaneously brought along cheese and crackers," Grant said.

Anyone captivated, or just feeling peckish and wanting to join in, cannot simply raid their fridge. This is an organised campaign. One supporter, when asked what cheese she would be taking, replied: "I'm not sure yet, I'll have to meet with Billy."

"We are a politically-correct group. There will be no French cheese at the Charlton match. It will be Somerset Brie and we will try not to litter the river," Grant said.

And what if Brentford reach Wembley? The ultimate prize in English football would undoubtedly be celebrated in west London with a cheese-and-wine party.

Newcastle close in on Asprilla

KEVIN KEEGAN, the Newcastle United manager, returned from Italy last night confident that he had finally concluded negotiations to bring Faustino Asprilla to the club (David Maddock writes). Keegan had been involved in protracted talks over the payment structure of the Colombia international's contract.

Asprilla, the Parma forward, wanted half of the money up-front, instead of over the course of the four-year deal. He is thought to have negotiated a signing-on fee in the region of £2 million, in addition to wages of around £15,000 a week. After talks lasting two days, Keegan finally agreed a transfer that will cost Newcastle a total of £6.7 million, inclusive of the signing-on fee. Asprilla will receive £1.2 million a year.

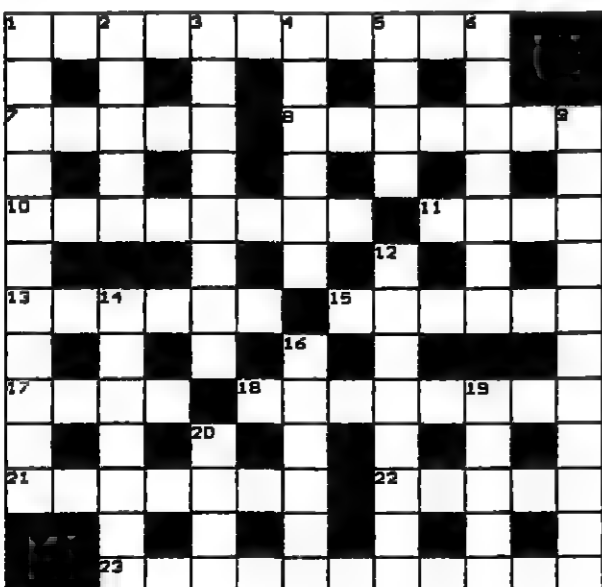
The player however, has yet to sign the contract and has said he will stay with Parma until the end of the month. It is thought that the delay is because he wants to negotiate a settlement with Parma.

Asprilla said: "I'm about to start on a fascinating adventure and I'm going happily. Parma don't want me while Kevin Keegan has shown great interest. Newcastle will be a breath of fresh air."

Gradi's goal, page 40
Venables prepares, page 40

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

No 687 in association with
BRITISH MIDLAND



ACROSS

- 1 Perfection; furthest point (Lat.) (2,4,5)
- 7 Account of the year (5)
- 8 Harsh, extreme (7)
- 10 Decorated with glittering gems (8)
- 11 Artful lure (4)
- 13 Wealth (6)
- 15 Plain, rigorous; 8 (6)
- 17 Lug, drag (4)
- 18 As flag flies out of respect (4,4)
- 21 Open framework, crossed strips (7)
- 22 Nebraska city; Normandy WW2 beach (5)
- 23 Vision-corrector worn in eye (7,4)

DOWN

- 1 Primitive (type of man) (11)
- 2 Chinese black/white animal (5)
- 3 Less polluting type of petrol (8)
- 4 Give latest information (6)
- 5 Conspiring group (4)
- 6 With one leg on each side (7)
- 9 Document confirming identity, claims etc (11)
- 12 Coastal promenade (8)
- 14 Corrosive; sarcastic (7)
- 16 Taker of pictures (6)
- 19 Aslound (5)
- 20 One from Helsinki (4)

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Post your entry to Times Two Crossword, PO Box 6886, London E2 8SP to arrive by next Monday. The winners' names and solution will appear on Wednesday.

Name/Address

SOLUTION TO No 686

ACROSS: 1 Old hat 5 Chef 9 Genuine 10 At home 11 Radiator 12 Basket 15 Sample 18 Disclaim 20 Fossil 22 Electra 23 Kink 24 Lanet
DOWN: 2 Logjam 3 Handicap 4 Twist 6 Hush 7 Flame 8 Nearby 13 Skeleton 14 Medley 16 Anorak 17 Mirage 19 Shell 21 Span

Kohl and unions set goal of 2m more jobs

FROM ROGER BOYES
IN BONN

GERMANY'S Government, trade unions and employers vowed yesterday to work together to cut by half the number of unemployed over the next four years.

The blueprint was drawn up after four hours of negotiations under the chairmanship of Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor, and sets out measures that would make the labour market more flexible, cut social welfare spending and spur new entrepreneurs.

All sides, while acknowledging the problems ahead, hailed the plan as an important first step. "Now things can really get going," said Dieter Schulte, the union federation leader. "We are agreed on the basic goal of halving unemployment by 2000."

Registered unemployment stands at close to four million, so the commitment is to create two million jobs. Günter Rexrodt, the Economics Minister, was more cautious, saying that they "had laid out principles upon which we can work to form a consensus and create better conditions for increasing employment".

There is no consensus on a number of crucial issues. The unions are resisting changes to the early retirement programme, which is proving costly to the Government. Moreover, their offer of wage restraint may not come into effect until next year.

Employers want value-added tax to be raised to ease the burden of social welfare contributions. But Theo Waigel, the Finance Minister, is against the idea. So is the opposition Social Democratic Party. Its chairman, Oskar Lafontaine, who was not invited to the talks, described raising VAT as "poison to the economy".

Economists, analysing forecasts and company plans, predict German growth will rise above 2 per cent in 1997 but unemployment will stay high at 9.6 per cent of the workforce this year, and 9.4 per cent in 1997.



Vincent Beguin Billecocq, left, a former tenant, in front of a stripped-out fireplace at the château of Mme du Barry, in Louveciennes, outside Paris; right, the exterior

Woman held over 'stripped' French properties

FROM SUSAN BELL
IN PARIS



Yokoi: three years in Japanese jail

KIKO NAKAHARA, a British resident and the daughter of a Japanese business magnate, has been arrested by French police and charged with forgery and breach of trust after allegedly buying 15 historic properties in Europe and stripping them of their contents for personal gain.

Between 1985 and 1989, Ms Nakahara, who is said to have represented herself as a protector of French heritage, allegedly bought eight châteaux in France, spending almost 100 million francs (£13 million). During the same period she apparently bought seven other European castles, mainly in Britain and Spain.

She and her husband are accused of stripping the French properties of their contents, including priceless

antique furniture, tapestries and statues, and selling them. It is thought some of the items may have been sold in London. The couple allegedly even ripped out 16th-century fireplaces and original wood panelling. The empty châteaux were then allegedly abandoned.

Although she barely speaks a word of French, Ms Nakahara was allegedly extremely convincing in her self-acclaimed role as the Japanese saviour of French heritage. Immaculately dressed, she was described as "refined", "charming" and "very well brought-up" by former owners who were allegedly persuaded that Ms Nakahara would cherish and preserve the family homes that they could no longer afford.

Ms Nakahara was allegedly aided by her husband, Jean-Claude Perez-Vaneste, 49, an international business-

man, who prefers to be known as Jean-Paul Renoit. He allegedly accompanied his wife on her buying trips to France, acting as a translator. Former owners recall that he was adept at negotiating a good price, mentioning projects to turn the castles into museums, hotels, or upmarket tourist attractions.

One of 17 children, Ms Nakahara is the favourite daughter of Hideki Yokoi, an octogenarian Japanese millionaire who bought the Empire State Building in the late 1980s and whose business empire, Nippon Sangyo, specialises in construction, transport, bars and casinos. Mr Yokoi is serving a three-year prison sentence in Tokyo for manslaughter and fraud, after a fire in one of his hotels in which 33 people died. The tragedy was attributed to a lack of standard safety provisions.

French police have sought to question the couple about the châteaux affair since 1992. However, they found their investigation blocked by long legal battles with Nippon Sangyo's powerful lawyers.

However, when M Perez-Vaneste created the company Châteaux Holdings in 1995 with the assumed motive of selling the properties, Nippon Sangyo complained that the couple planned to sell the Japanese company's assets for their own profit and a warrant was issued for their arrest.

M Renoit was not with Ms Nakahara when she was arrested last Friday during an appointment with a property adviser set up by fraud police. He was still being sought by police yesterday. Ms Nakahara is now being held by the French authorities in a women's prison near the château of Versailles.

Banned Mitterrand book on Internet

BY SUSAN BELL

COMPUTER buffs can now read the banned book about François Mitterrand, *The Big Secret*, by the late French President's doctor, but only on the Internet.

The police said yesterday that they had paid an informal visit to Le Web, the trendy cyber-café in the eastern

French town of Besançon whose owner, Pascal Barbraud, put the forbidden book on the internationally accessible Internet. A police inspector said the visit was not part of legal proceedings.

"The lawyers I have contacted confirmed the legal loophole which surrounds access to the Internet," M Barbraud said. "In any case I am not

selling anything." The book's publisher, Editions Plon, which opposed the move to put the book on the Internet, has taken no action.

Copies of the book sold out within two hours when it appeared in French bookshops last Wednesday. The next day it was banned after a request from the Mitterrand family, including his widow

Danielle and his illegitimate daughter. Stunned by the ban, M Barbraud transcribed into his Internet site late on Tuesday the entire 190-page book by Dr Claude Gubler, the late President's physician, who claims that the former President, who died of prostate cancer on January 8, lied to the French public for 11 years about his health.

Naples fire kills nine

Naples: The death toll from a fire, which erupted in a Naples suburb overnight, rose to nine yesterday. The dead included five construction workers working on a slip road linking the peripheral district of Scandigliano with the city, and a young girl.

The fire triggered blasts, which sent a cement-mixer and dozens of cars hurtling into a crater about 66ft, fire-

men said. Water pipes exploded after the collapse of a building, and the crater was filled with water.

Residents of the collapsed building said they had repeatedly complained to authorities that the building was in danger of collapse. Panic broke when authorities evacuated about a thousand people from their homes, fearing further explosions. (AFP)

Poland's PM quits over spy claims

BY ROGER BOYES

JOZEF OLEKSY, the Polish Prime Minister, announced his resignation last night after the military prosecutor said there was enough evidence to investigate the former Communist on charges of spying for the KGB.

"In the name of reasons of state, I have decided to resign," Mr Oleksy said on Polish television. But he firmly reiterated he is innocent.

The decision has plunged Poland into its worst political crisis since the collapse of Communism. It puts a question mark over the future of the whole Government, dominated by former Communists, and over Poland's relationship with Russia.

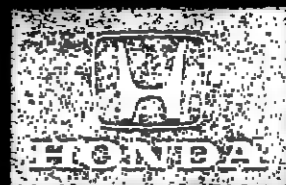
The military prosecutor said yesterday that he would be investigating the role of two former Russian diplomats based in Warsaw — Vladimir Alganov and Grigori Yakimishin. Mr Oleksy had been accused by Polish police officers of passing documents to his long-time next-door neighbour, a KGB colonel. The Prime Minister had denied espionage, but admits enjoying a friendship with the agent, saying he took him to be an innocent diplomat.

He had promised to resign if the prosecutor pressed charges or opened a case against him.

The mere fact of his friendship with a senior KGB agent — they went hunting and played tennis together — was enough to jeopardise his career for many Poles. It is now unthinkable Mr Oleksy will, as planned, succeed President Kwasniewski as chairman of the party.

Opposition parties, with the Freedom Union to the fore, are demanding that a new government be put together to restore Poland's world credibility.

The pivotal role is being played by the Polish Peasant Party, which represents the farm lobby. It is in alliance with Mr Oleksy's former Communists, but could make common cause with the opposition.



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Utah execution may end use of firing squads

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN BLUFFDALE, UTAH

TWO minutes after midnight tonight, John Albert Taylor is due to be strapped to a chair in a converted warehouse beneath Utah's Wasatch Mountains and shot through the heart by five anonymous marksmen.

He will eat pizza for his final meal and be allowed a cigarette as he walks to the execution chamber. As a black hood is pulled over his face Taylor, who was convicted seven years ago of raping and murdering an 11-year-old girl, will have the grim satisfaction of knowing his death may end the use of firing squads in America.

The last American prisoner to die this way was the first to be executed after the Supreme Court allowed the reintroduction of the death penalty in 1977. Gary Gilmore, another convicted murderer, was shot at dawn in the same state prison on January 21 that year.

A law is being drafted that would end Utah's distinction as the only state to give death row inmates a choice between lethal injection and the firing squad. The law's sponsor, Sheryl Allan, is anxious that the world should look on Utah "positively, as a progressive state", as it celebrates its centenary and prepares to host the 2002 Winter Olymp-

pics. But as prison guards stack sandbags behind the chair, death penalty opponents have descended on Salt Lake City to find local opinion largely against them and a prisoner determined to die.

Taylor, 36, has admitted breaking into the house where Charla King lived until 1989, but denies killing her even though his fingerprints were found near her body. Last month he dismissed his lawyers, dropped all appeals and demanded to be shot so as not to "flap around like a dying fish" under a lethal injection. The move sent officials at the



Taylor raped and killed girl, 11

Utah Department of Corrections scrambling to improvise the building of a firing range and the recruitment of five marksmen.

A disused warehouse in the main state prison 25 miles south of Salt Lake City has been equipped with one-way mirrors for observers and plywood partitions for the firing squad. Officials were deluged with offers from marksmen, including a letter signed by an entire US Army platoon stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The firing squad will consist of local police volunteers. One rifle will be loaded with blanks. Yesterday they practised firing in unison on command. The gunmen appear to have the support of most of this deeply conservative state.

Taylor's decision has nevertheless proved awkward for the Mormon Church, which dominates Utah life. Criminologists have speculated that behind his sudden demand for a firing squad is an ancient Mormon belief in "blood atonement", without which church members who have sinned cannot be forgiven nor rise through the many levels of heaven in the afterlife. Church elders have denied strongly that blood atonement is a part

of their theology, and have pointed out that Taylor recently converted to Catholicism. He has been a Mormon for most of his life, however.

Taylor's death warrant has been signed, and only a federal appeal from the prisoner can prevent his execution. He has vowed to make no further appeals, but human rights lawyers are petitioning state politicians and holding a series of press conferences and vigils in an attempt to prevent what they see as a barbaric step. A firing squad "lays bare the brutality of capital punishment", Joe Baker, of Amnesty International, said.

Charla King's mother echoed more closely the feelings of a nation that has seldom been less tolerant of violent crime. "I don't want his execution," she said on national television on Tuesday. "I need it."

Richard Townes, 45, who maintained his innocence to the end, was executed by injection for the 1985 robbery and murder of a 22-year-old woman shop assistant. "I'm innocent. That's all I have to say. I'm innocent," he said in a last statement. Witnesses said the execution was delayed 22 minutes because of difficulties in finding suitable veins for the injection. (Reuters)



Timu, a female gorilla conceived in a test tube, with Dawn Strasser, keeper of Cincinnati Zoo nursery. The animal, born last October, is the newest member of the American zoo's gorilla family and went on show for the first time on Tuesday

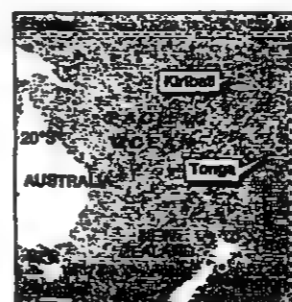
Pacific braces for millennium storm over matter of degrees

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

PACIFIC Islanders are squabbling over the International Dateline. They cannot agree which far-flung piece of land will be first to see the sunrise of the next millennium.

The argument, which has involved the United Nations, the Royal Greenwich Observatory and much flexing of beachside palm trees, might not have happened but for entrepreneurial schemes for New Year's Eve, 1999. Travel agents have detected a market for "two-are-first-to-see-in-the-new-millennium" parties and are scouring the Pacific for the first landfall west of the dateline. The agreed venue will make a fortune.

The search has been complicated by the decision of some islanders to "move" the dateline. The tiny nation of Kiribati, formerly the Gilbert, Phoenix and Line island groups, has angered its Pacific neighbours by moving part of



the line to its eastern extremity, Caroline Island. The little-noticed move was a key item in the 1993 political manifesto of President Teburoro Tito and solved the problems which beset Kiribati when it was split by the dateline. It was, formerly, a bold man who used the word "today" in Kiribati society.

Nearby Tonga, which was happily expecting to be venue for the lucrative parties, thinks that Kiribati has pulled a fast one. The King of Tonga is not happy. The International Dateline Hotel in the Tongan town of Nukualofa not only faces an unwanted name change, it may also lose the bookings it has taken for the turn of the millennium. There is similar dismay in the Chatham Islands, and on New Zealand's North Island, where the town of Gisborne was limbering up for the big night with the argument that west of the line it is the first place with good bars. Gisborne District Council was planning a party atop a mountain which has early views of the sunrise.

As a result of the presidential manoeuvre, however, Kiribati will now see the millennium's dawn 22 minutes before the Chathams, and a humiliating 80 minutes before Tonga.

The Royal Greenwich Observatory and cartographers have accepted Kiribati's line change, and appeals to the United Nations have met with the response that the dateline, decided by an international conference in 1884, is beyond its control.

Soldier sacked for refusing UN duty

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

A HERO to many in the American heartland, Michael New was dismissed yesterday in disgrace by the United States Army after refusing to serve under any flag other than his own.

Specialist New, 22, an army medic based in Germany, is the first American serviceman to be court-martialled for failing to wear United Nations insignia on his uniform and accept a posting to Macedonia last year under UN command.

New — who has been busy bolstering the Republican presidential campaign of the commentator Pat Buchanan — has staunchly refused to change his position since the unit was dispatched to the Serbian border. He now faces a maximum of six months in prison, a dishonourable discharge and a loss of pay.

The tribunal at Leighton Army Barracks in Würzburg took only two days to find him guilty of disobeying an order. His act of resistance has been the staple diet of talk shows and, although largely ignored by the mainstream, the case has made headlines in small papers and conservative newsletters throughout America. Supporters have printed "Michael New For President" stickers, and militia leaders celebrate his name as they burn the UN flag.

On the campaign trail, Mr Buchanan has gained overwhelming applause for citing New as an example of an individual fighting the terrors of world government.

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State of the Union speech praises 'a wonderful wife, magnificent mother and great First Lady'

Clinton claims the centre ground to upset Republicans

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

DISGRUNTLED Republicans accused President Clinton of perverting their best issues yesterday as opinion polls and pundits agreed he had won the first big battle of the 1996 election with a masterful State of the Union speech on Tuesday night.

Nearly half the country watched on television as Mr Clinton used his hour-long address to Congress to seize the centre ground, blur his ideological differences with the Republicans and distance himself from Democratic orthodoxies. He twice declared: "The era of big government is over."

Robert Dole, Mr Clinton's probable opponent this November, selected himself to deliver his party's formal response. He used it to reinforce his shaky credentials as a conservative, "revolutionary" and highlight the very ideological differences Mr Clinton sought to minimise.

"We have starkly different philosophies of government and profoundly different visions of America," the 73-year-old Senate leader insisted. Mr Clinton believed in "more government, bigger government and more meddlesome government" and was "almost

the last public defender of a discredited status quo".

Most agreed that Mr Clinton won this inaugural encounter. Even some Republicans criticised Mr Dole's unconvincing delivery.

"President Clinton can fake a compelling vision while Senator Dole is too decent to try to fake a vision he clearly does not have," said Lamar Alexander, a rival for the presidential nomination. Pat Buchanan, another rival, said: "To beat this guy we had better have an authentic conservative."

Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker, conceded it was "the President's night" but accused Mr Clinton of "talking like Ronald Reagan" while "governing like Lyndon Johnson".

President Johnson was the architect of the "Great Society" programmes that Republicans now seek to dismantle. A CBS television poll showed 69 per cent approval of Mr Clinton's speech, and by 49 per cent to 34 per cent, respondents said that the President understood their needs best. An ABC television poll gave the speech a 75 per cent approval rating with 51 per cent preferring Mr Clinton's vision and 28 per cent backing the Republicans.

State of the Union addresses always make compelling theatre, and this began with Mr Clinton handing Mr Gingrich a spoof text of his speech, reading: "Thank you, and good night." That was what Mr Gingrich had earlier told reporters he wanted to hear.

But the emotional high point came when the President praised his embattled wife, Hillary, who has been subpoenaed to appear before a White-water grand jury tomorrow. Departing from his text, he looked up to the gallery and called her "a wonderful wife, a magnificent mother and a great First Lady". Democrats cheered. Republicans stayed mostly silent — the presence of Chelsea Clinton, the Clintons' daughter, perhaps deterring stronger signs of disapproval. Mr Clinton's speech was a



Clinton: "The era of big government is over"



Hillary and Chelsea Clinton watch the arrival of President Clinton in the House Chamber on Capitol Hill to deliver his State of the Union address

brilliant exercise in political positioning. Seeking to deny the Republicans' potent "wedge" issues in November, he embraced their broad themes of smaller government, personal responsibility, welfare reform, family values, law and order, and curbs on illegal immigration.

With the public disgusted at Washington's endless partisan wrangling, Mr Clinton posed as a conciliator, praising the Republicans for the "determination" with which they were battling to balance the budget. The Republicans refused to join the applause when he insisted a deal was in reach, reinforcing their image of rigid ideologues.

Mr Clinton took stands only where he was sure of public support, condemning Republican cuts in environmental programmes, demanding political reform to curb the influence of big money, and vowing to protect health insurance programmes for the poor.

Mr Dole's reply seemed directed primarily at Republican primary voters. Despite 35 years in Washington, he blasted "the elites in charge [who] don't believe what the people believe in", claimed America had been "hijacked by liber-

als", and defended the Religious Right.

He laid out his presidential platform, saying "We must rein in our runaway Government, return power to the people, reduce the tax burden, restore justice and put faith once again in the basic goodness, wisdom and self-reliance of our people".

Leading article, page 19

President calls Hollywood summit on screen violence

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT CLINTON has called a Hollywood summit at the White House to improve the moral content of American entertainment, thus wresting one of the most popular Republican themes from his opponents in Congress.

In his State of the Union speech, Mr Clinton said he would invite film and television producers, as well as those involved in the music industry, to meet in Washington next month and create a Hollywood free of violence and acceptable to young America.

"I want media companies to create movies, CDs and television shows you would want your own children and grandchildren to enjoy," he said. "I want them to work with us on concrete ways to improve what our children see on television."

In a deliberate attempt to steal the thunder from Robert Dole, the Republican current-

ly Mr Clinton's chief rival for the presidency this year, the President gained an immediate response from senior executives at broadcast networks who said they could not turn down such an opportunity.

Last year Mr Dole launched a fierce attack on the moral fabric of Hollywood, which he said had shrouded America in nightmares of depravity, violence and sex. "A line has been crossed," Mr Dole said at a fundraising address in Los Angeles. "It is crossed every time sexual violence is given a catchy tune; when teen suicide is set to an appealing beat; when Hollywood dream factories turn out nightmares of depravity."


Citing the films *Natural Born Killers* and *True Romance*, as well as the music of Cannibal Corpse, Geto Boys and 2 Live Crew for their depictions of mindless violence and loveless sex, Mr Dole had made particular

mention of the conglomerate Time Warner for its distribution of gangsta rap music.

The company has long been a target of attack from the Right for its production several years ago of the album *Cop Killer*, a violent rap against the police force by the black artist, Ice T.

Mr Clinton's campaign both in 1992 and this year is well supported by the liberal establishment in Hollywood. The President, who counts Barbra Streisand and Steven Spielberg as close personal friends, is likely to gain far greater support.

But TV executives were sceptical about the long-term success of the meeting. One said: "Of course, we'll take him up on his offer. How can you ever turn down an opportunity to discuss an important issue with the President. But say we reach an accommodation with Bill Clinton, would that ever be enough for Bob Dole?"



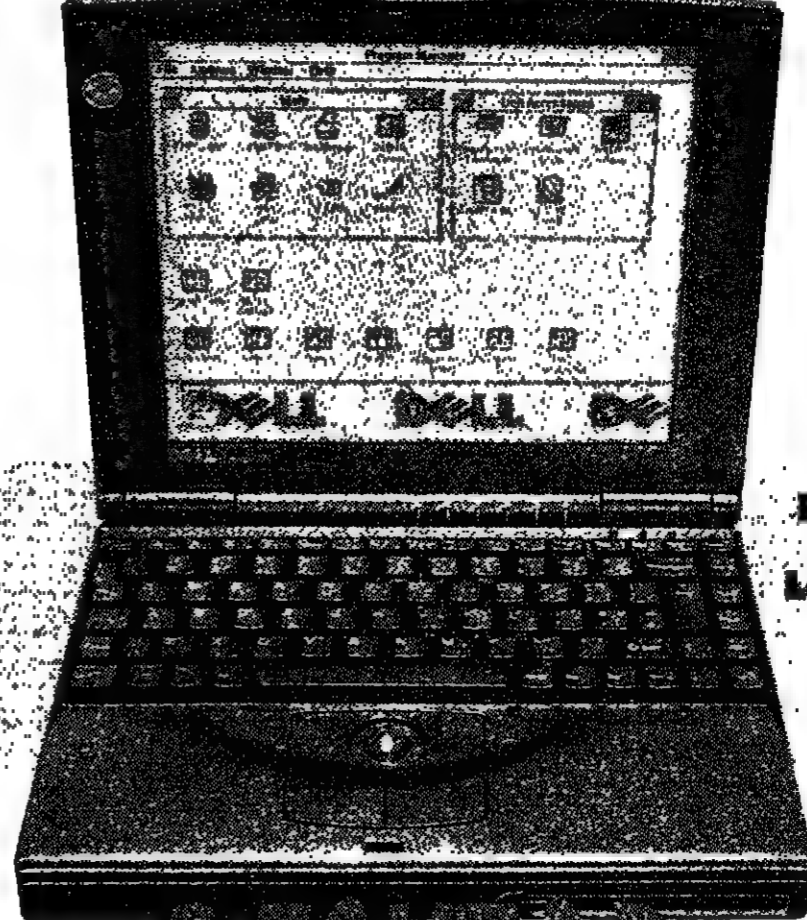
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Spinal discord □ Asthma alert □ Pregnancy warning

Beating back pain

NEIL SUMMERS had been commissioned in the Royal Marines and was looking forward to life as a regular officer when his career was cut short by ankylosing spondylitis.

Ankylosing spondylitis is an inflammatory disease which attacks the joints of the spine, the sacroiliac joint where the spine joins the pelvis, and sometimes the larger limb joints. Very occasionally it involves other joints too. The inflammatory process is not confined to joints, as the eyes are affected in one third of all patients with ankylosing spondylitis, who develop iritis. More rarely, the disease involves the heart, the aorta, and very unusually causes fibrosis in the lungs.

Ankylosing spondylitis affects men three times as often as women and, as in Mr Summers' case, usually strikes when they are still young. The first symptoms have nearly always become apparent before the patient is 40.

The disease runs in families and attacks those who have a particular tissue type, HLA B27 positive. These patients are also liable to suffer Reiter's syndrome, which has many similar characteristics.

When Mr Summers, who is now 32, left the Royal Marines, he obtained degrees in physical training and physiology before working in Japan. His back was giving rise to increasing pain and, as with many patients with ankylosing spondylitis, he found that his spine was becoming fixed, inflexible and increasingly bent.

While in Japan, he was struck by the Japanese habit of having a stretch break from the office routine. At an appointed time, the office supervisor rings a bell and all the staff desert their computers to have a good stretch, rather in the way a cat or dog will stretch in front of a fire.

Mr Summers started stretching himself and noticed that when he did so, his stoop became less pronounced and the pain in his

back eased. The natural tendency with ankylosing spondylitis, and many other causes of backache, is to lean forward as this usually lessens the pain. Traditional physiotherapy aims to strengthen the muscles which maintain a straight back.

Having discovered the value of stretching, Mr Summers' next ambition was to design a curved rack on which he could lie on the floor for a couple of minutes a day, so as to straighten out his spine. Once he started to use the back stretcher, he noticed that the pain eased, spinal flexibility increased and that he stood more erect.

Mr Summers' wooden back stretcher is now marketed in this country as well as in Japan, and is claimed to have helped sufferers with a wide variety of types of backache. The rack may look, Mr Summers admits, like an instrument of torture, but it is a well-designed and comfortable bed rest.

Although the back stretcher eases back pain for many of those who use it, others are inevitably left with discomfort of varying severity. These people may find relief by using a TENS — transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation — machine. TENS machines supply tiny electrical impulses to subcutaneous nerves, creating impulses which block the transmission of messages conveying pain to the brain, so the patient's discomfort is relieved without drugs.

Another type of machine using electrical impulses is the X Pain device, designed by Dr Alexander Macdonald. With this machine, the electrodes are applied to the spine rather than the peripheral skin. One electrode is placed above the top of the shoulders at the level of the first thoracic vertebrae, the other on the level of the 10th to 12th thoracic vertebrae, just below the level of a bra strap.

The Macdonald X Pain has the advantage of giving longer relief from shorter periods of treatment. With repeated use, the pain-free period increases in length.

Details of the different types of TENS machine may be obtained from the National Back Pain Association, 16 Elm Tree Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8AT, which also provides comprehensive advice on all aspects of back pain. The Macdonald X Pain machine is marketed by APR Medical UK, Castle Gate, Clitheroe BB7 1AD (01200 444449) and the back stretcher by Enanef and Co, 63 New Inn Lane, Guildford GU4 7HT (01483 33276).

When sedation is a danger to asthmatics



AS ASTHMA tends to be worse when a patient is tense and anxious it always seemed reasonable to suppose that some form of sedation might help them, and lessen the danger of an asthmatic attack.

Recent research, published in the *British Medical Journal* by doctors working at the McGill University in Montreal, shows that this is not so. Simple sedatives of the type which might be prescribed to help a patient through a transient crisis doubled the rate of respiratory collapse severely enough to endanger the life, or even to cause death, in the patient with asthma.

Even more striking was the effect of the major tranquillisers used in the treatment of schizophrenia or in patients who have schizophrenic-type symptoms. When these drugs — such as Largactil and its successors — were prescribed, the number of patients who were dangerously ill, or died, as a result of the asthmatic attack tripled. However, the use of antidepressant drugs did not affect the death rate in asthmatic patients.

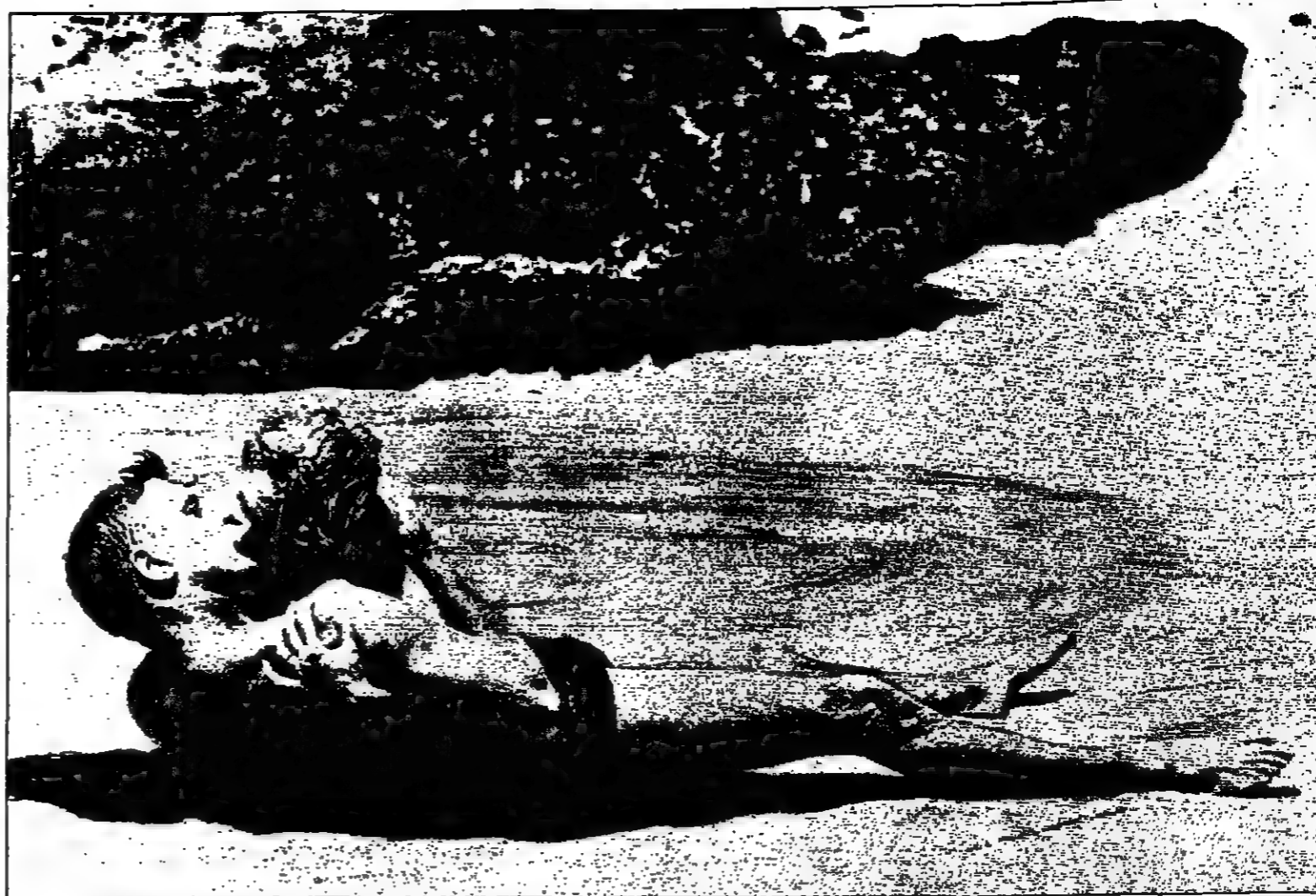
Epilepsy drug danger to unborn



THE foetal alcohol syndrome is well known. Women who are heavy drinkers and who have a baby may find that their child is born slightly mentally retarded and with, classically, a piggy-type face. Less well known is the effect occasionally seen of taking sodium valproate (Epilem) when pregnant. This drug is used extensively to treat many different types of epilepsy.

Taking it when pregnant can produce neural tube defects which give rise in the child to a characteristic syndrome, named the foetal valproate syndrome. The baby has an unusually high forehead, poor sight and hearing, a flattened nose and usually displays some mental retardation.

General Practitioner magazine reports that 15 parents with children affected by sodium valproate are taking court action against their family doctors, and another 45 against hospital specialists. The parents claim that they were not warned adequately of possible dangers to the unborn baby if an epileptic takes sodium valproate when she is pregnant.



Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr in *From Here to Eternity*. Not only do women benefit from promiscuity but there is a biological case for affairs

In praise of infidelity

Leading biologist Dr Robin Baker tells Rachel Kelly that a desire to have secret affairs increases a woman's chances of producing successful children

Bar-room chat will never be the same. A new book promises to revolutionise the way we think about sex in general, and in particular the cliché of the promiscuous, stud-like male and the more docile, faithful female.

In fact, female promiscuity and infidelity lie at the heart of sexual behaviour, according to the biologist Dr Robin Baker, a reader in zoology at Manchester University and author of a book published next month, *Sperm Wars: Infidelity, sexual conflict and other bedroom battles*.

Not only do women benefit from a degree of promiscuity, but the book also makes a biological case for women having secret affairs. If a woman has a stable relationship but can become impregnated by a male with better genes than her regular partner, then she increases the chances of producing successful children.

Whatever women may say when they have an affair, they do all the things that make pregnancy more possible. They reach sperm-retaining orgasms, avoid the issue of contraception and often have sex when they are most fertile.

Sperm-retaining orgasms are crucial, Dr Baker says. They are not essential for conception but in Dr Baker's new scenario, orgasms are vital in mating with a successful male.

How does he know? By reading a 1989 survey of 4,000 women conducted jointly by *Company* magazine and Dr Mark Bellis, formerly of Manchester University, and by more recent joint work analysing the orgasms and sperm intake of 11 couples over several years.

His research found that when a woman reaches orgasm, the entrance of her cervix dips down into the area at the top of the vagina known as the seminal pool. If it contains semen, then far more of it is likely to be sucked into her reproductive tract.

Having an orgasm at the same time as her partner, or immediately after him, increases the intake of sperm. With a regular partner a woman is more likely to reach orgasm first, so more of his sperm are lost in flowback. However, in an affair a woman's orgasm tends to be either simultaneous or after the man, both of which encourage high sperm retention and conception.

Moreover, she is likely to be impregnated by sperm of a higher quality. If a woman has sex with two men within a week, both of their ejaculates may be alive within her repro-

ductive tract at the same time. Which of them will fertilise any egg she produces will depend on the competitive ability of their sperm.

Thus the "sperm war" of the book's title. The sperm from rival males will compete to fertilise the egg first and prevent the other from getting there. The competitive edge of a male's sperm becomes a vital

The sperm from rival males will compete for the egg

part of his overall reproductive ability and of his biological "fitness". By provoking the sperm war by her infidelity, a woman ensures that she is fertilised by the fittest male. Her children will inherit their father's abilities so she will have fitter offspring.

Given the potential biological advantages of having an affair, why don't all women do so? Blood-group studies have

shown that around 10 per cent of children are not fathered by their legitimate fathers, figures which have been endorsed since 1991 and validated by the introduction of the Child Support Agency. Cheap DNA finger-printing was developed for fathers who questioned whether a child was theirs.

Higher social status women with successful husbands are less likely to have affairs. In contrast, two studies in lower-block communities, one in Liverpool and one in the South East, show that 30 per cent of children are illegitimate.

The reasons are obvious. Higher status women have potentially more to lose by having an affair. They could be abandoned by their existing partner if he were to find out, or face possible aggression if he were to stay. In addition, all involved risk catching a sexually transmitted disease. But all women can benefit from a secret affair, which ensures all the advantages and none of the disadvantages.

The most hopeful implication is that the work of fertility clinics will be revolutionised. At present 10 per cent of men and women are sub-fertile and have problems conceiving.

"My work on the way that sperm fight to fertilise the egg — with some sperm designed to sacrifice themselves and destroy sperm from other males that may be in the woman's body — should help clinics understand more about the ejaculate," Dr Baker says. "Fertility clinics find it difficult to identify fertile and infertile males. This could help."

Dr Baker is careful to avoid any moral conclusions. "I'm not saying whether it's right or wrong to have affairs," he says. "I'm not trying to provide a biological excuse for people who are having affairs. I am just seeking to explain people's behaviour."

As his research affected him personally? The 51-year-old academic lives with his partner, the writer Elizabeth Oram, in Manchester and he has five children, three grown-up sons by his first wife, and two younger children by his second. "I think that it has made me more cynical about people's behaviour."

"People might think having an affair is all about romance, but I tend to think, 'Well, actually, what you're saying is that you're trying to collect some better sperm from somebody else'."

Sperm Wars: Infidelity, sexual conflict and other bedroom battles is published by Fourth Estate on February 14, price £7.99.

Sandy Bisp reports on the saving of Alice Plunkett's ear

Alice Plunkett, one of our most promising young riders, won against the odds in her first point-to-point of the season at the weekend, even though her horse didn't come first. She was just happy to be riding again eight weeks after a fall in which her left ear was severed by her horse's hoof.

Alice had no idea what had happened. "A friend with me saw it happen. She just said 'you've cut your ear a bit' and I put her scared look down to the blood. I found out later that an ambulance had picked up my ear and packed it in ice. On the way to the hospital my neck was taped to the stretcher."

Alice then underwent a four-hour operation to re-attach her ear at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, by Henke Giele, an Australian plastic surgeon, and Tim Goodacre, a consultant. Dr Giele reconnected an artery a third of a millimetre wide at the back of Alice's ear to re-establish circulation before, as is customary in micro-surgery, drafting in the leeches. Leech saliva contains hirudin, a powerful anti-coagulant. As it feeds, a leech facilitates drainage until damaged veins can heal and takeover as the circulation is restored.

A cohort of 20 leeches, supplied by Biopharm, in Wales, sucked away at the ear while Alice's horse-riding

Healing habits of leeches



Alice Plunkett: riding again

friends helped her to overcome her natural repugnance by giving the leeches pet names. "Becky Blandford, who had a bad riding accident herself a couple of years ago, was wonderful and visited me every day," acknowledges Alice.

"Others, like John Francoise and Marcus Armage, came too. I quickly got used to the leeches, but did scream when one fell on my night-dress, which was pathetic."

The Radcliffe Infirmary stores leeches in a fridge to

slow them down: they have a life expectancy of five years. When needed, they can absorb a blood meal five times their three-gram bodyweight. When sated, they detached themselves. "Once or twice I'd hear a leech fall into a box attached to my ear after feeding for about 15 minutes," Alice said.

Her spirits ebbed at one point, but for good reason. "I felt awful," she says. "Then I had a transfusion to replace the blood the leeches had drained from me."

Before leaving hospital she was told not to smoke and to cover her ear to protect it from extreme cold for the weeks it would take to heal.

"The cold could send blood vessels into spasm, risking frost-bite. But even the really cold weather we've had hasn't set back my recovery or stopped me riding," says Alice, who simply donned an extra woollen hat or ear muffs.

Now, her ear is virtually as good as new. "About half an inch had to be cut off the top rim. I could have had plastic surgery, but it would have taken two months to heal," Alice said.

Tossing back her brown mane of hair to reveal an ear which, at its worst, looked bruised, she maintains: "I'm lucky to have my ear at all."

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INSIDE SECTION
2

Return of the old hunk
Al Pacino and Robert De Niro in *Heat* and Harrison Ford in *Sabrina*. Read Geoff Brown's review of the new films. Page 31.

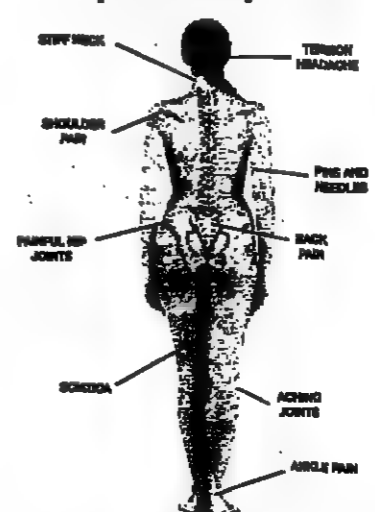
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So just what does make the Americans laugh?

John Cleese is having to reshoot the final scenes of the sequel to *A Fish Called Wanda*. Quentin Letts explains the American obsession with happy endings

MEMO from Mel Brooks to John Cleese: "Cut the words, mister, and add the sound of gunfire or smashing plates." That, says the veteran director of Hollywood comedies, is how to tickle the modern American filmgoer.

Cleese is no mean comic talent himself, but it is advice he may want to take after the rejection by trial audiences in Los Angeles of his new film, *Fierce Creatures*. They loved the first half, but when the Kevin Kline character was bumped off, and as the movie moved towards what Cleese calls his "fiendishly clever ending", the preview audiences stopped laughing and became restive. As a result, Cleese and his cast must reassemble and shoot a new ending for the film before it can be released.

How can Cleese, veteran of Monty Python, *Fawlty Towers* and *A Fish Called Wanda*, to which *Fierce Creatures* is a sequel, have misjudged the comic balance of this film? Have American comic tastes changed? Can *Fierce Creatures* be salvaged?

Mel Brooks, reclining in his office in Los Angeles, says "yes" to the last two questions. Brooks, whose hits have included *The Producers*, *History of the World, Part One* and *Blazing Saddles*, believes that American cinema has, in recent years, lost some of its intellectual edge. "You have to sugar-coat your message now," he says. "American audiences feel that if characters are only talking, nothing is going on. Words have no weight any more." Woody Allen is a brilliant exception, but his movies are small beer, financially.

America has no shortage of low common denominators, and in a country of mixed linguistic abilities and ethnic variety, the scope for subtle in-jokes is smaller than in Britain. In recent years there has been some appreciation of irony, thanks to the lip-curlingly sarcastic wit of *Roseanne* and *Frasier* on television, but Americans still grunt happily at stereotypes and toe stubbing.

Roger Langley, a rather grandly titled humour-in-the-workplace consultant, from Maryland, says: "Guys like exploding lavatories, and women like puns and riddles. But the really crucial thing about American audiences is that they don't want a downer at the end of a film." It was even true when Boris Karloff made *Frankenstein*, says

Langley. "A scene where the monster threw the girl into the water was too strong for test audiences." Mel Brooks had similar problems with his 1991 movie *Life Stinks*. Alan Ladd Jr, then head of MGM, took a look at the ending and counselled a rethink. "He felt it was a little too negative, and he asked us to change it before we had finished shooting," says Brooks. "I was happy to take his advice."

Preview audiences, who sit with verdict dials at the ends of their fingertips, frequently make a nuisance of themselves. Some directors have questioned their independence, suspecting studio executives of packing them with flunkies.

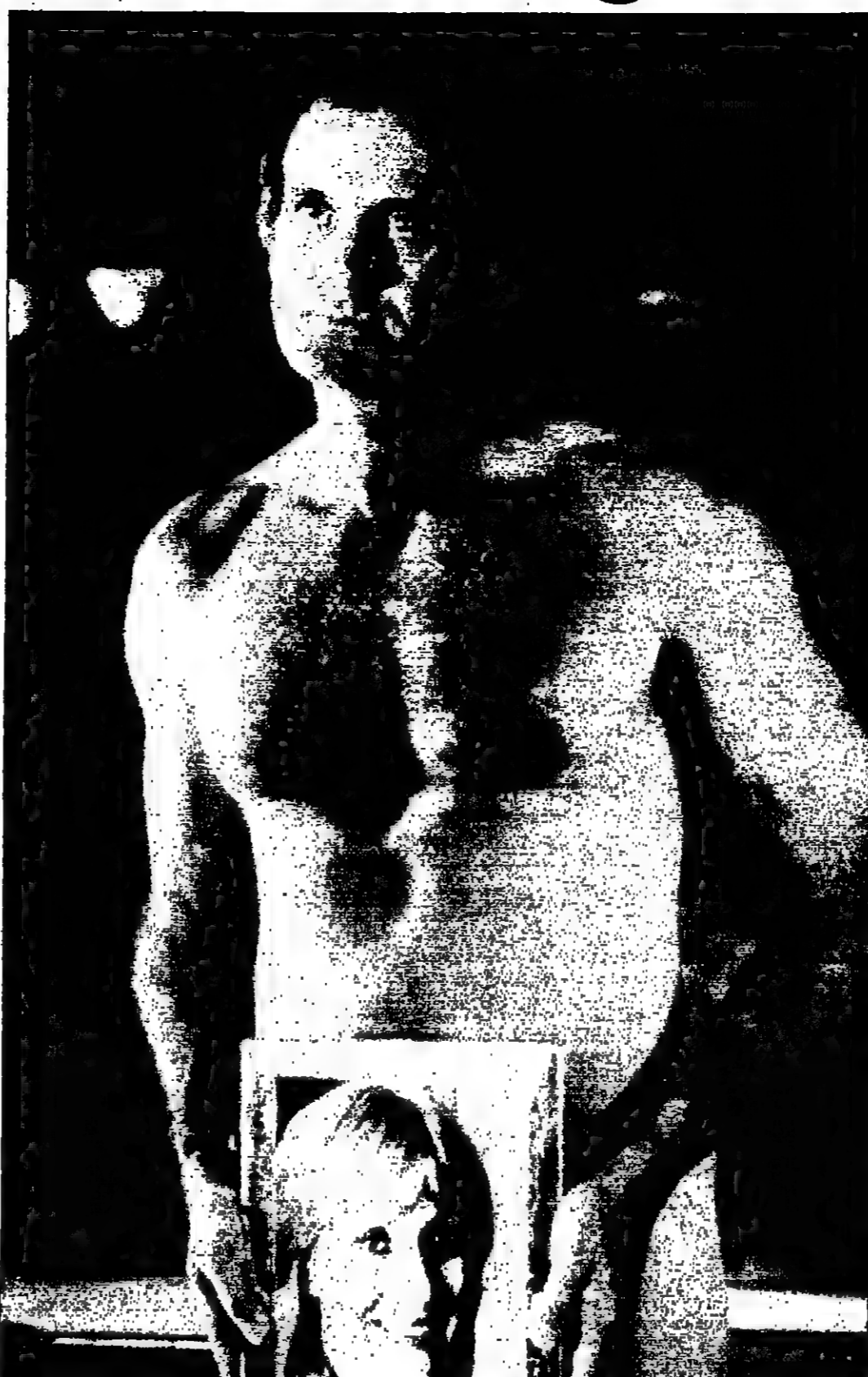
Frank Capra shot five endings for his 1941 film *Meet John Doe*. The preview audiences gave a mixed verdict, so Capra ignored them and chose his own ending.

American cinema-goers have long had different tastes from Europeans. *Dr Strangelove*, Stanley Kubrick's black comedy about nuclear Armageddon, wowed viewers in Europe and in a few East Coast art house cinemas, but it left Middle America cold. Robert Sklar, the Professor of Cinema Studies at New York University film school (alumni include Martin Scorsese, Oliver Stone and Spike Lee), says: "British humour tends to be a little darker than ours. The blockbuster era, with its cardboard characters, has softened audiences even more."

Sklar describes how, in 1948, Preston Sturges tried to make a joke out of a conductor who wants to murder his philandering wife. *Unfaithfully Yours* is a merry little film, but for America in the 1940s the joke somehow fell flat. America in the 1990s is proving similarly tricky, although, this time the problem is lack of audience attention and a constant demand for noise. Brooks blames the music television channel, MTV, and the recent rash of explosive action films.

Of his own handling of *Fierce Creatures*, Cleese has said, with candour: "I have been working on this script for eight years and have still made mistakes which I did not realise until now. All I can say is that in this business nobody knows anything."

The Kevin Kline character, an oily marketing executive, will, says Cleese, have to be resurrected in



Cleese was a smash hit in *A Fish Called Wanda* — but the sequel is in trouble with test audiences

some ingenious manner, despite an earlier demise in the film. Kline will soon be well qualified to play Lazarus in any forthcoming biblical effort: his *Wanda* character, Otto, also met a grisly end, only to be revived.

The regrouping of a now far-

flung cast for re-filming is a logistical nightmare (Michael Palin is incommunicado, somewhere in Borneo) and the cost may rise to £500,000 for each new minute of film footage.

To return to a piece of work you thought finished is to re-encounter

the despair of a schoolboy being presented at lunch with breakfast's unfinished plate of kedgeree. Matron used to say: "Come on, it will do you good." Cleese and his associates no doubt hope the promise will stand equally true for *Fierce Creatures* — *Take Two*.

The Italian woman, passion and Mr Hurd

"SIGNORA AGNELLI is very proud of her décor," one of the minister's senior aides whispered as we walked down the endless corridors of the vast foreign ministry on the outskirts of Rome.

Decor? We were there to discuss the weighty issues of European integration: the single currency, common foreign policy, enlargement. At 73, Susanna Agnelli, sister of the Fiat tycoon Gianni Agnelli, is Italy's first female Foreign Minister and is in charge of EU affairs for the next six months.

But Signora Agnelli has no fear of male officialdom. She grew up in the hedonistic atmosphere of Italy's unofficial Royal Family, and spent eight years at the foreign ministry as a senior official herself. If she wants to change the ministry wallpaper to startling sky-blue regency stripes, that is what she will do, even if it clashes a little with the great Old Master paintings which adorn her walls. "Oh, it was so drab," Signora Agnelli says in the breezy style which is her hallmark. "This is so much more cheerful, don't you think?"

"Susanna Agnelli is Italy's best hope," an experienced observer of the Italian scene told me when I arrived. She has certainly survived longer than many expected: she was "fished out" of political retirement (her own phrase) just over a year ago by Lamberto Dini, the caretaker "technocrat" Prime Minister who succeeded the mercurial Silvio Berlusconi.

She has an air of slight hauteur, rather like a public-school headmistress. The impression is accentuated by her height: she is an imposing 5ft 10in, "very tall for an Italian woman," as she observes. She is a handsome woman with an energy and style which belie her 73 years. In her memoirs she describes the "free love" which marked the early postwar years in her set, and she still has Latin passion, not least for tall and distinguished Englishmen.

She admits to having been "very fond" of Douglas Hurd when he was Foreign Secretary. She used to take walks with him in a romantic garden near Rome when he visited Italy. "I loved his sense of humour," she says, reminding me that as an Agnelli she had a British governess ("Miss Parker") and a somewhat British lifestyle. She claims to have "just as good a time" with Malcolm Rifkind.

She can certainly match her European counterparts in experience as both politician and administrator. She was something of a left-wing rebel in her youth, professing admiration for icons of the Left such as Castro (no doubt partly

as a reaction against her privileged upbringing); she became mayor of the seaside resort of Argentario in Tuscany by crusading against local building rackets. She then became an MP, and rose to be both Senator and Euro MP.

But she is also an Agnelli. Her memoirs are entitled, with evocation of a lost world, *Vestivamo alla Marinara* (We Always Wore Sailor Suits). The sailor suits were from Bond Street. She was born a year after Gianni and remained close to him as he rose to become head of Fiat (which their grandfather founded), and thereby the uncrowned "King of Italy".

As teenagers at the family's Turin mansion and Riviera villas, she and Gianni drank champagne for breakfast and gambled and flirted in Monte Carlo. She still speaks impeccable English in an accent as much French as Italian. "Never forget you are an Agnelli," was Miss Parker's injunction to her charges. Unlike the family owns newspapers, football teams and banks as well as whole industries.

In the heady post-war atmosphere of liberation she met the love of her life, Count Urbano Rattazzi, who was a law student. It was love at first sight. They married almost immediately to the astonishment of their friends, had six children, and went to live in Argentina, but were divorced in 1971.

IT WAS after her return to Italy that she threw herself into local and then national politics, managing to stay untainted by the backhanders and bribes (*tangente*) which have undone so many of her contemporaries. Nowadays Susanna lives alone in a one-bedroom flat in Rome full of English chintz. She also has a seaside house at Argentario which fills with children and grandchildren in the holidays. Unusually for a minister, she offers advice to the love-lorn in an "agony aunt" column in the magazine *Oggi*, but keeps her own private life private.

The only hint that she might feel her age comes with her assertion — clearly deeply felt — that "time is precious, and must not be wasted". Giving a disarming if slightly wintry smile, she says she took as a compliment a reference I once made to her undisguised impatience with "tedious" EU meetings. "Why should we sit for 12 or 15 hours when we could achieve exactly the same result in three or four? It is extremely silly to suppose that if you stay until midnight you have somehow worked harder."

RICHARD OWEN



Susanna Agnelli

Scowling is back in fashion

JOHN PRESCOTT, the man who recently won the lovingly-metred admiration of a woman poet, has now attracted attention to the very opposite end of his emotional range. As Tony Blair bravely tried to defend Harriet Harman from the dispatch box, Mr Prescott's face, graced by the best of times, settled into what is being called the "scowl of the year".

Not since Medusa turned men to stone with a flash of her fiery gaze has so much damage been done with a single glance. Insiders have often talked of Mr Prescott's antipathy towards Ms Harman, but until now party loyalty has kept his true feelings under wraps. Even now he expresses nothing in words. It is all in the look — as loaded as the Mona Lisa's.

but not half so enigmatic.

Seventeenth-century poets, convinced that the eyes were the mirror of the soul, would have made much of Mr Prescott's persistent grimaces. Indeed, Hamlet's *Mousetrap* was designed to trap his stepfather into giving something away in his face. The expected scowl from Claudius was what finally convinced Hamlet to kill him.

Only by an unfortunate type-setting error did American comics of the 1940s announce: "Lawless men fear more than anything the terrifying sight of Batman's cowl." It was the glower, more than



That Prescott face

the hood, that righted wrongs.

And one cannot help but remember York's words as Richard II faces his downfall: "Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes/Did scowl on gentle Richard. No man cried 'God save him!'." Is Ms

Harman to go the way of poor King Richard?

It is perhaps particularly unfortunate for Mr Prescott, as a politician, that he did not live in the 19th century, that golden age of scowling. Any-one who wore less than the grimace was considered too frivolous for public office. And even in this century,

Winston Churchill would not have been the man he was without the famous frown.

But the 1990s is a happy-clappy time. Tony Blair smiles so hard that, like the Cheshire cat, the grin is often there for some minutes after the rest of him has gone. Pop group REM recently celebrated *Shiny, happy people*, and rave culture demands the wearing of a yellow smiling face — the scowl was thus not only portentous, but unfashionable.

Above all, though, didn't John Prescott's mother ever tell him that you shouldn't pull faces, in case the wind changes and you stay like that for ever?

Does the Harman affair mean that the wind has changed? Watch this face.

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A turning point for the Tories

Kenneth Baker counts the victims of the Harman affair

This was the week when hope returned to the Conservative Party. Tory MPs, buffeted by opinion polls and defections, suddenly started to walk tall. The cheers that accompanied the Prime Minister's devastating and witty destruction of Tony Blair at the dispatch box on Tuesday were heartfelt.

In politics there are some defining moments: what follows them is different from what went before. This week we saw such a defining moment. For more than two years, Tony Blair has carefully crafted the image of a new, reformed Labour Party with high-sounding objectives and laudable motives. He almost got away with it. But this was the week when Old Labour shattered the new, and two years of reform were stripped bare.

This week showed that the Labour Party is still a snarling, jealous, vindictive pack of class-ridden bigots. A grant-maintained school for Blair's son was swallowed only because of the prospect of office. But a grammar school for a Shadow Cabinet member's son made the party's gorge rise — John Prescott's pugnacious, contemptuous scowl said it all.

The casualties of this week begin with Tony Blair — there he stands, battered but unbowed. His party does not want to follow him on education — the very subject which he says is at the heart of new Labour's policies. Labour's tribalism has swamped the progressive soundbite. The soundbite man was at a loss for words. Indeed the Prime Minister, so often dismissed as mute and inglorious, drove a stake into Tony Blair's credibility when he said, "I want to be tough on hypocrisy and tough on the causes of hypocrisy" — the bitten was biting back.

The second casualty is Harriet Harman, for she is going to remain in office. Tony Blair cannot afford to lose her, for he would then stand isolated, as a Labour Party member who has rejected the local comprehensive school. Harriet Harman is like Captain Ahab, lashed to the stricken body of Moby Dick. She, in an act of inhuman cruelty, has been given a suspended sentence, for she will be tortured for nine months and then rejected at the Labour Party conference.

The third casualty is, unfortunately, Harriet Harman's son, Joe. I have little sympathy for a mother who, knowing full well how her party would react, exposes her son to such unwelcome publicity. He has become the guilty one who bears on his young shoulders the sins of his parents. Donald Dewar was forced to say that the boy should not be victimised. I think that many Labour activists at the grassroots across the country would be surprised to learn that children who did not go to the local comprehensive school were being victimised.

The fourth casualty is truth. David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, was twisting words to make a trap for fools when he said: "Of course we believe in parental choice, and that choice will not be distorted by tests or interventions." What this means is that there will be no distinction between a grammar school, a grant-maintained school and a comprehensive. Collective uniformity and not individual choice is still at the heart of Labour thinking. To adapt Henry Ford's famous dictum, "You can have any school you want, as long as it's the same as the next one."

The fifth casualty is the "stakeholder" slogan. The parents of children who go to grant-maintained or grammar schools are stakeholders. They have a stake in the education of their children, but if the only choice is the comprehensive school provided by the local education authority, then the real stakeholder is the LEA itself. At the very first test, Blair's big idea is shown to be hollow, brittle and meaningless.

The sixth casualty is the integrity of public life. The veil over Labour's sleazy morals has fallen away. And let there be no doubt, this is a moral issue. It is simply wrong to grab privileges for one's own children and then deny them to others.

Blair, the soundbite man, was at a loss for words

Labour's mistake this week is huge. The Tories are divided on European economic and monetary union, but that is an economic issue. Labour is divided on choice in education, and that is a moral issue. Economic issues are about the thinking head of a party, moral issues are about its soul. Labour taunts about a divided Tory party will now be thrown back at them.

Almost for the first time in three years, this episode has allowed the Tories to go on to the attack. That is a lesson which the party and the Government should take to heart. They should not be put on the back foot by having to defend their own record again and again.

My advice to ministers is to tear up all those defensive briefs lovingly prepared by government departments and Central Office. Follow Danton's advice, when the French army seemed to be facing almost inevitable defeat. "Laudate. Laudate. Toujours l'audace." On to the attack. Act, if you like, like an Opposition. Forget the shadow-boxing and aim to leave bruises. When the history of the next election is written, I suspect that people will turn back to the events of this week, and particularly to the Prime Minister's performance at Question Time, and say, "That was the turning point."

The author was Chairman of the Conservative Party, 1989-90

Peter Brooke
25.1.96



"We're sorry for all the distress, but we've done nothing illegal or immoral..."

Mitchell's snub to Major

The British Government is putting a brave face on a report which ignores the Ulster majority, writes Paul Bew

So the "peace process" staggers forward; once again a meltdown has been avoided. Why, though, did the Mitchell commission not resolutely back John Major's well-known stand on the arms issue?

There is a feeling in some quarters in Belfast that the evidence given by the RUC may have played a role in weakening the British Government's position. If the Mitchell commission heard from the RUC that the British Government's insistence that at least some arms should be decommissioned by the IRA before any all-party talks, this evidence may have had an impact on the commission's findings. But the real problem for the Government lies not in the apparent wavering of its preconditions — Sir Patrick Mayhew had already opened the door to this possibility — but in the substitute confidence-building measures now proposed.

There is much noble assertion of peaceful and democratic principle in the Mitchell report, but it should be noted, in particular, that the reference to the need for all parties to "abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations" has taken the place of the much firmer statement of the principle of consent which was to be found in the Downing Street declaration. It is quite likely that Sinn Féin will soon sign up at the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin, in support of this rather more vague principle of agreement.

Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams has been spared the immediate embarrassment of having to accept that the present partition of the island has a democratic basis. To that extent, his leadership has been strengthened. But this is only a postponement of what will be for him an evil day, when he is forced to face the implication that the status of Northern Ireland cannot change without the consent of the majority of its people.

There are those in Belfast who believe that exactly the same thing has happened with decommissioning. It too is only postponed until the start of all-party talks. There is no doubt that the difficulties faced by Mr Adams have been eased, but only in the meantime.

In particular, attention should be paid to the notion in the report that

commitments to exclusively peaceful methods will have to be honoured. As it stands, Sinn Féin would claim it has already agreed to much of the Mitchell formula (the most pressing difficulty will be with the condemnation of punishment shootings and beatings). But the real problem lies not with the political wing of Sinn Féin, but with the IRA, and this is the clue to significance of the word "honoured". The rhetoric has to be

alternative but to fudge, but here it chose to fudge largely for the sake of placating nationalist amour propre. But although Ulster Unionist MPs were irritated by this and on other scores, their response yesterday was carefully modulated. They cannot have been delighted by the commission's stance, but they were hardly surprised.

The speech by the Ulster Unionist deputy leader, John Taylor, in his constituency anticipated yesterday's events quite precisely. The unionists, including the Democratic Unionist Peter Robinson, have clearly learnt the lessons of the past. Over-emotional responses to the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1995 and the framework document of 1994 served absolutely no purpose. This time, the unionists, like the Government, are determined to build on the positive.

In the end it was John Hume who lost his temper in the House, but this should not detract attention from the risks taken by the Ulster Unionists. In Belfast, Ian Paisley Jr — in the absence of a father, who is in poor health after a trip to the Cameroons — angrily pushed the conventional Democratic Unionist Party line that the commission's report was a predictable betrayal of the unionist majority.

The DUP is currently at a low ebb in the polls, having fallen to a mere 7 per cent. But nobody should doubt its ability to regain support if the British Government were to call all-party talks at which some unionist chairs would unavoidably be empty.

In the modern history of Anglo-Irish relations, the British Government has quite deliberately avoided a

confrontational stance. Nevertheless, as an official said, "eighty-five per cent of the play lies with London"; the long-term historical and economic responsibility for the Province lies with Mr Major, as he eloquently affirmed yesterday.

In the House of Commons, Mr Major moved to regain the initiative by promoting very much more warmly than he had done before the idea of an elected body. Crucially, John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, helped him by using restrained language on this topic.

It now seems clear that the British Government's view is that in the absence of a first move on arms by the paramilitaries, the only other possible route to all-party talks is through the electoral process.

The truth remains, however, that the Government itself needs to do more in the field of confidence-building. It needs to discuss with the unionists much more frankly and realistically than it has in the past its broad vision of the political future for the Province. If it can do so, the time won for the "peace process" this week will not be in vain.

"There are challenges for everyone" — this was the vogue phrase of the day, as officials strove yesterday to put the best face on the Mitchell report. The overwhelming majority in Northern Ireland — 83 per cent according to the latest poll — have been asked to accept what they have hitherto rejected: talks before any decommissioning gets under way. "I cannot see how an election can be regarded as a block to progress," said Mr Major.

By supporting the election proposal, the Prime Minister has made sure that the challenge is extended to the leaders of the Northern nationalists. The British Government will be reluctant to make an irrevocable decision, unless it sees the Northern nationalists' opposition to an election somewhat retined.

The Ulster Unionists were at their most placatory yesterday, when they said that they have no intention of seeking the return of Stormont, or indeed any purely internal settlement. Mr Major seemed to be saying in the House that much will now depend on Mr Hume's capacity for generosity and flexibility. He was quite right.

Books, beer and passion

Rachel Cusk on judging the Whitbread Prize

The Whitbread Book of the Year is a bit more fun than most other book prizes. Perhaps this is in its essential nature. Brewers, one feels, operate in a sphere as opposed to its friendly Friar-Tuckishness, its ethos of communalism and conviviality, to the solitary peaks of artistic endeavour as it is possible to be. Although this partnership of liquor and literature has had a destructive history, its endurance testifies to a fundamental attraction. But it is hard to get the boorishness of beer out of the Book of the Year. If Whitbread knew anything about books, it surely would not line them up like so many beauty queens in a judging process by necessity unfair and by implication superficial.

In his prize-giving speech, Sir Richard Hoggart, the chairman this year of the judging panel, rightly found in favour of the brewers' record on sponsorship. Whitbread makes no claim to erudition; indeed, its only involvement is to do what it does best, namely administering large quantities of alcohol in comfortable surroundings. The business of comparing things which cannot be compared — a biography with a children's book or a volume of poetry, a mature novel with a first novel — is harder to dispatch. According to Hoggart, the chairman of Whitbread, Sir Michael Angus, cheerily likened the competition to Crufts. That, perhaps, marks the point at which an innocence of literary politics becomes a troubling disregard for it.

It is one of the difficulties of financial largesse, particularly where it touches nerves as acute as those of the literary sensibility, that it represents a collision of irreconcilable interests. Without sounding ungrateful, the charitable impulse is hard to argue with. It is an act of self-articulation on the part of the giver, yet writers, more than most, find it hard to surrender that privilege.

Hoggart's advice to us was to compare the books not so much with each other as with themselves. How far had each book fulfilled the requirements of its form? Which of them had surpassed these requirements, to reach the magical place where the form is actually being advanced before one's eyes? Was Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* a better novel than Kate Atkinson's *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* was a first novel?

In the volatile (and highly partisan) rabble that was the final judging meeting, literary criticism just rolled up its sleeves and fought dirty. But their luxury of discussing books with a fantasy-football-style team of intellectual grandees could not be forgotten. There can be few conversations more dignifying than those about books; it is one of the great gifts of writers that they teach us how to talk about them.

Julian Critchley spoke movingly — and at a mature politician's unbreachable length — about Gladstone's Candia McWilliam was illuminating on the subject of Rushdie. Simon, their gallantly defended the neglected outpost of children's literature, although we all had sorrowfully to admit that here it was the form itself, rather than Michael Morpurgo's practice of it, which was disadvantaged. Oddly, poetry was similarly suspected of slightness, despite being the noblest form of all.

It is here that the philistinism of the Whitbread seemed most apparent, as if, for want of any better criteria, the judges merely set to weighing and measuring the volumes rather than discussing them. In fact it seems to have been the intimacy of poetry rather than its insubstantiality which denied it the brewer's bias of glory; added to which, a love for poetry arises partly out of familiarity and repetition, giving an untoward feeling of rawness to the unfamiliar. Later, though, when one of Bernard O'Donoghue's poems was read out, the whole packed dining hall was rapt in silence.

The two categories which bear most comparison — novel and first novel — amassed between them enough similarities to be pitted against the stentorian eloquence of Roy Jenkins, rather than each other. Like *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Kate Atkinson's *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* is an epic family saga, a great comic novel, a book alive with stories. In both of them we found the joyful articulation of the modern age; in *Gladstone*, a polished monument to the past. Hoggart advised that staple of democracy, a secret ballot, from which Atkinson's book, to his, our, and later her complete surprise, emerged the clear winner.

It is hard to award such an accolade to a writer at the beginning of her career, for fear of interfering with the natural course of her talents. It is hard, too, to explain why, while Rushdie and Jenkins at their peak are producing work of whose magnificence we can be proud, a relative novice should be permitted to command the field. Books, however, as Whitbread inadvertently but reliably reminds us every year, do not make easy competitors; and it is left to the judges merely to be persuaded, by whatever means the writer can devise, to fall in love. Where Kate Atkinson's novel seduced us, her rivals were just good friends.

Worthy prize

TWO MEN in Virginia Bottomley's life are locked in combat. The Heritage Minister's husband, Peter, is fighting her special adviser, John Berkow, for a new parliamentary seat.

Berkow versus Bottomley takes place in the blue-ribbon constituency of West Worthing. Both men are on the shortlist to be selected as the candidate. But Bottomley is the chicken, running from his marginal Eltham constituency in the desperate hope of a safe new perch. The scrap could be unsavoury. Despite the appalling mess in which Labour now finds itself over education, the two are looking at a constituency with a nodular majority of nearly 20,000 — a prize worth baring the knuckles for.

The constituency's shortlist of six also includes Michael Fallon, the former Education Minister, and Michael Stevens, who is running from his Shoreham seat. On Monday, local activists — a tight-knit bunch who primly refuse to discuss the matter — will be choosing the final three. The odds are that Bottomley won't make it without his wife's support. But where will her loyalty lie?

● Could the cantankerous columnist Sir John Junor be considering a return to his hotel warship, the Sunday Express? Sir John was

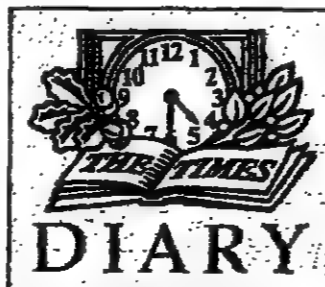
lunching yesterday at the Howard hotel with the paper's Editor, Sue Douglas. A supposedly discreet venue, the Howard was having with newspaper executives, not least Sir David Jenkins, Junor's boss at The Mail on Sunday.

Bard debt

THERE WILL be a shadow across supper tables tonight as Scotsmen wash down their haggis and neeps with a few wee swallows to mark



"So much for romance — she was looking for staff"



Burns Night. The International Burns Festival, a year-long celebration of the bicentenary of the bard's death, is descending into farce and penury.

The festival's chairman disappeared last year. Plans for a global Burns Night supper and appearances by Pavarotti and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa have been scrapped. And now the Bank of Scotland has scotched a scheme for a Burns credit card, which would have raised £300,000 for the increasingly lacklustre event.

Bad apple

MICHAEL HOWARD worked his way round his heroes in *The Archers* at the 45th birthday party in London of the Bournemouth soap on Tuesday, professing himself a regular listener. It was he, after all, who in 1994 intervened in the case of Susan Carter, who was jailed after trying to protect her brother from the police.



The Princess of Wales

But he gave short shrift to the old curmudgeon of the series, Joe Grundy, who has been embroiled recently in an illegal cider-making operation. At the party, Joe played

by Edward Kelsey, who looks like Sean Connery's bank-robbing brother) tried to enlist the Home Secretary's support in saving Joe's eldest son Alf, a petty thief. "I thought he might be able to do something for Alf," rasped Kelsey in his Bournemouth burr. "But he just didn't want to know."

It's a crime

THERE'S little chance that Peter Cadbury is about to rejoin the Tory party which he abandoned in a blaze of publicity because of the Government's pitiable record on law and order. His Hampshire home was burgled again yesterday, and he lost £15,000 of chattels. Cadbury was screaming blue murder. "I would have shot the thieves if I had been there. This is just another example of the Government's failure to provide sufficient funds for local policing."

Kitted out

THE PRINCESS of Wales may have lost her staff but she has found friends in the world of Lycra leisure wear — she has agreed to endorse the kit she wears on her daily jaunts to the gym. The Princess has been wearing the leotards and shorts manufactured by Fit Kit, a Northamptonshire company run by Sharon and Andrew Leeding, who refrained from spilling the beans. They went



Edward 'Joe Grundy' Kelsey

to Kensington Palace to discuss their new range on Friday and in a one-hour meeting with the Princess, she said she would be happy for them to publicise that she wears their thigh-gripping shorts. Their logo will now be visible, but Andrew refuses to say whether any money has changed hands.

● Does Granada know what it is taking on? The executive chief at a Forte hotel in Ascot, the Beyrsted, will be wearing a lucky charm during the National Cup of the Year competition. "I'll be wearing my wife's underwear for good luck in the finals," Jaim McCormack says.

P.H.S



NATURAL SELECTION

New Labour needs new policies for survival

This week has been the most testing for Tony Blair since he came to power. It has exposed the divisions in his party, the speed with which its new-found discipline can disintegrate, and the incoherence of its education policy. But the force with which Mr Blair faced his critics — and those of Harriet Harman — has also given a glimpse of his personal tenacity under pressure.

Politicians differ in their responses to difficult times. Some, such as Neil Kinnock, crumple almost visibly in the face of a storm. Others, such as Margaret Thatcher, rise powerfully to the occasion. Who can forget her electric performance in the House before the election that forced her out of Downing Street? Mr Blair, who seems actively to court comparison with the last Tory Prime Minister, has something of her inner steel. Even according to his critics, the speech that he gave to his parliamentary party yesterday was one of his most effective.

His intention, it seems, was to set a precedent for future political debacles, in or out of office. He was not prepared to allow his party to force a perfectly competent colleague out of his Shadow Cabinet. Nor was he going to let the Tories hound her out. One of the factors that propelled his MPs back towards a sullen unity was the comparison that Mr Blair drew with John Major's propensity to buckle under pressure when his colleagues were in trouble.

Immediate danger has been averted. Ms Harman spoke with some composure in the health debate, and the Shadow Cabinet rallied round her. But the wounds will take much longer to heal in this peculiarly human political saga. Most unforgiving will be those MPs and activists who were faced with the same educational dilemma for their children and yet opted on principle for less academically successful local schools.

Ms Harman's many opponents lost no chance to speak out against her. Labour's carefully nurtured unity was fractured for 48 hours — an indication of what is likely to

happen in Government when unpopular decisions have to be taken. And the public has seen how thin is "new" Labour's professed attachment to consumer, rather than producer, interests.

For what greater evidence could there be that Labour is out of touch with ordinary parents than that a member of its own leadership team could not abide by its policy? If parents want selection in education for their children, they should have it. It should not be the business of central government to lay down every law.

Labour has already conceded a small element of parent power in its promise not to abolish existing grammar schools unless parents of prospective pupils want this to happen. Here lie the seeds of a policy that could rid Labour of its incoherence over selection. For, after Ms Harman's actions, Mr Blair cannot continue to pretend that his current policy makes any sense.

If Labour is serious about decentralisation, it should allow parents in every education authority to decide periodically for themselves whether they want comprehensive schools or selection. What better way is there both of offering them a stake in their children's education and of wooing the middle classes back into state schools in the South East? Some areas will opt for one system, others for the other, providing the diversity that most educationists agree to be a good thing. Worries about secondary moderns being deserted by good teachers could be remedied by allocating them more money per pupil, following the example of "magnet" schools in America.

The Labour Party may not be in the mood for such radicalism in education policy. But what the Harman row has done is to make Labour MPs face up to the fact that many inner-city comprehensives are abysmal and that something has to change. If the debate on education becomes more realistic within the party, then something more than Tory smiles will have emerged from this wreck.

THE STATE OF THE PRESIDENT

Clinton spoke more about himself than the nation

The State of the Union address is one of the great events of the American political calendar. It has traditionally been the opportunity for Presidents to mobilise Congress and public alike in favour of new legislative programmes. Mr Clinton's address on Tuesday evening was rather different in tone and ambition. Instead of policies for the present it concentrated on themes for American society and its future.

This philosophical tone was deliberate. Over the last few weekends dozens of historians and political scientists have been ushered into Sunday evening supper with Mr Clinton. All have given five minutes to offer their views on the country and its challenges. The President then led them in discourse that frequently lasted late into the Washington night.

The product of all this thinking was unveiled in his text. The President recognised that "the era of big government is over": this is almost certainly true. Instead America faced an uplifting future, "an age of possibilities", that progress had ushered in. In this Mr Clinton echoed themes associated with his chief antagonist, Newt Gingrich.

From this lofty terrain the President then informed fellow citizens where he stood on the issues. The ongoing budget dispute was largely ignored. Instead we learnt that Mr Clinton favoured lower teenage pregnancy rates, "character" values in education, school uniforms, homework conducted with the television off, clean air and world peace. He was militantly opposed to violence in the media, drugs, disturbed families, gang-warfare, pollution, and ethnic conflict.

In reality, Mr Clinton's list of platitudes reflected hard political reality. With Republicans in firm control of both branches of Congress there was little point in offering detailed programmes. He knew that if he campaigned as a "big government" candidate there would be minimal chance of re-

election. The Clinton strategy for 1996 is clear. He will endorse everything popular that his opponents pass and, as in the present budget crisis, sit out the difficult and unpopular decisions which, curiously, this particular set of politicians seem willing to take. He will portray himself as an above-politics politician, standing resolutely for the shared values of all Americans.

In that sense the State of the Union was his campaign opener. His strategy may well work. Ronald Reagan's "Morning Again in America" re-election drive in 1984 was similarly timeless yet delivered him 49 states. However, it also produced a second term that was disappointing compared with the achievements of his first. That may not matter much to the President, especially if, as seems likely, a Republican Congress is also re-elected this year.

Nonetheless, this speech and its strategy carry real risks. Mrs Clinton's impending visit to the Whitewater Grand Jury is part of those dangers. Through inept public relations and appalling conduct in the whole controversy the first couple have created a scandal that may erupt in uncontrollable fashion. It is difficult to run a campaign based on shared values when one of the most sacred of these — personal honesty — has been brought into public question.

More fundamentally, Mr Clinton and his advisers may have misjudged the mood of Americans. The Republican takeover of Capitol Hill in 1994 was based on the most detailed and programmatic election strategy in the history of congressional contests. Whoever emerges as the Republican nominee, while he will doubtless enjoy using the character issue against the Clintons, will speak in similarly detailed terms as Senator Dole did in his official reply on Tuesday. The times are drawn between two strikingly different political visions. Americans seem destined for a fascinating presidential battle.

RIN TIN TIN'S TIN

Cats are gourmets, but give your dog a bone

It's war! It's war! As we report today on page 4, British supermarkets and independent manufacturers are baring their fangs, pawing the litter furiously and growling like lunatics at each other over the major matter of pabulum for pets. As the fur flies, and the cans of compressed meat whizz through the air, British pet-keepers are set to reap a lip-smacking reward for their mogs, pooches, rabbits, pot-bellied Vietnamese pigs in a muddle, ocelots and budgerigars.

The consumer — in this case, happily, vicarious — has never been more spoilt for choice, and equally, the consumer's pet has never been more spoilt. Winston Churchill may once have sat the poodle Rufus, bibbed-up for dinner, on a Persian rug, but the modern Churchillians leave no bone unturned. There is now food for dieting dogs, dower dogs, fidgety kittens and hamsters that go gloom in the dark. There is even separate food for budgies and canaries, though how the little whistlers can tell the difference remains shrouded in mystery.

Yet the main battle — the Somme, if you like, of the petfood world — is being fought over the four-legged eaters. The days when dogs were fed bowls of mush, made by boiling offal for hours, are now something only

grandma can recall. Dogs now eat from cans, boxes, tubes and cartons. They eat jellied chunks, meat lumps, flavoured dollops, coloured pellets and fragrant biscuits. Why, some of it looks good enough for us to taste: pass the haggis-flavoured pooch-paste, dear girl, it's Burns's night.

Catfood is more expensive, commensurate with a cat's inflated sense of its own worth. But cat-keepers are, as a rule, richer and more finicky than those who live with dogs: they are ready to pay the extra whack for a "gourmet" tin of rabbit shavings, or zander ravioli-for-cats. In tussling for the right to fill the bowls of the nation's cats, the petfood people are quite alert to the money that can be made from feline hunger — and from the soporificity of cat-owners.

But in the midst of this tug of war — said to be worth over a billion pounds a year — let us not forget that the happiest pets, whether dog, cat or white rat, are those that are fed on scraps from the kitchen. The next time little Caesar is hungry, consider whether he would not prefer a nice bowl of chopped sausage, carrots, bread and milk. That, for an animal, is gourmet. After all, one man's swill is another pet's feast... and there is not even a tin-opener to grapple with.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Inflation dangers of 'short-termism'

From Professor Emeritus Alan Day

Sir, It is disturbing that as influential and distinguished an economic commentator as Anatole Kaletsky is advocating (Economic View, January 18) expansionary policies which, if implemented, would yet again repeat the follies of "boom-bust".

He is probably right in identifying that public opinion is increasingly realising the disadvantages of a slow-inflation economy and forgetting those of rapid and accelerating inflation. It is, however, the duty of sophisticated commentators to inform the public of the real choices rather than to accept its understandable tendency to short-termism.

Three things have to be accepted. One is that average real incomes cannot, in the long run, rise faster than productivity — optimistically 2.5 per cent a year in the UK. Secondly, they can rise faster than this for a time, by using up some of the margin of spare capacity. Thirdly, no one today knows how to run a major industrial economy without some such margin — in the UK broadly around 8 per cent unemployment. Any attempt to push expansion of demand beyond this is likely to lead to steadily accelerating inflation — i.e. not merely to faster inflation but to ever-faster.

For a time, the majority of the population could undoubtedly be made to feel better-off if these three factors were ignored. To the credit of the Government it is doing its best to learn the lessons and to ignore calls to adopt short-termist strategies. To Mr Blair's credit, he appears to agree.

If either were to follow Mr Kaletsky's policies of "several consecutive years of 4 or 5 per cent growth" most of us would feel good for a time, but the erosion of the margin of spare capacity would lead to rapidly accelerating inflation and so unavoidably to sharp increases in taxes and interest rates — repeating the unhappy consequences when another eminent economic commentator (Nigel Lawson) was given his head.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN DAY,
Chart Place,
Chart Sutton, Maidstone, Kent.
January 19.

BBC chairmanship

From Dr J. M. Wober

Sir, John Wilkinson (letter, January 15) also see letters January 11) rightly points out that in the current circumstances it will be felt that the new chairman of the BBC is a political appointee: the strains arising from this will dissolve both the public and the BBC.

A way out of this difficulty would be to re-establish the governors outside the BBC. They would have a role similar to that of the Independent Television Commission vis-à-vis Channels 3, 4 and 5, in which the responsibilities of the body, informed by its staff and research unit, are to the public via Parliament instead of, as now, being a duplicate alongside the existing board of management facing the public as BBC insiders.

The "outsider" body would be financed (as also should the ITC) by a tiny fragment of the licence revenue; this would show that it and they are essential parts of the mechanism protecting public service broadcasting.

Yours sincerely,
MALLORY WOBER
(Principal lecturer),
School of Media Arts and Communication,
Bournemouth University,
Poole House, Talbot Campus,
Fern Barrow, Poole, Dorset.
January 15.

Fogbound airports

From Lord Berkeley

Sir, On January 17 you reported one-hour delays to all flights at Heathrow, due to fog on the previous day. This must have been a minimum figure.

I was booked that day on the BA shuttle to Glasgow. The 1415 was cancelled due to fog and we finally got on a plane at 1630, to be greeted by an announcement that, now we were all on board, the captain had applied for a take-off slot and there was a 90-minute delay; rather more than the one hour quoted. At this stage, I jumped plane, wishing we had been told the truth about the problems and that I had gone by train.

These delays were apparently not due to problems with take-off or landing but to difficulties of aircraft ground movement, which is still visual — and if you can't see the end of your wing it must be difficult seeing the next plane! Oh yes, and the runway lights also failed. The general view of passengers and staff that I met was of absolute chaos, both in the airports and on the roads around.

With capacity at Heathrow due to increase dramatically if Terminal 5 comes into operation, there is an obvious need to have a foolproof ground-movement system for aircraft in fog and a full range of new public transport links in place before it opens. Otherwise, this week's chaos will, sooner or later, be repeated on a much grander scale.

Yours,
TONY BERKELEY
(Public Affairs Adviser, Eurotunnel),
House of Lords.
January 18.

Support for Newbury bypass

From Councillor Simon Melville

Sir, Mr Adrian Fisher (letter, January 19) got it wrong when he said: "These self-appointed environmental pressure groups... lost the argument at Newbury after 20 years of lobbying and... public consultation procedures." They didn't take part in it.

I read with increasing anger the letter from Simon Lyster et al (the heads of the Wildlife Trusts, Greenpeace UK, Council for British Archaeology, World Wide Fund for Nature — UK, Friends of the Earth and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) on the same day.

Not one of these organisations appeared at the public inquiry in 1988. If they had a point to make they should have taken part in the democratic public consultation process. The public inquiry looked at more than 30 different route options, lasted many weeks and several hundred submissions were made either in person or in writing.

Newbury can only solve its local traffic problems once the through traffic has been removed from the town. The bypass currently under construction will achieve this and bring relief to the environment of Newbury itself. The sooner it is completed, the better.

Yours faithfully,
SIMON MELVILLE,
Councillor, Burghclere Ward,
Basingstoke and Deane
Borough Council,
Civic Offices, London Road,
Basingstoke, Hampshire.
January 19.

From Mr George Darwall

Sir, A depressing aspect of this dispute is the sheer waste. Caring for the countryside requires manpower and money, both of which are being squandered in protests and counter-measures. Meanwhile, an estimated 80 per cent of our small woods are unmanaged, with serious implications for rare species, like the dormouse, at Newbury.

If just 100 able-bodied participants (on whichever side of the protest) were to lay hedges instead, they might restore to vigour, before it is too late, over one mile of deteriorating hedgerow per day. The bonus for landscape and nature might soon outweigh the impact of a bypass which many will welcome.

Yours etc,
GEORGE DARWALL,
116 Bradenstoke,
Chippingham, Wiltshire.

From the Director General of the Freight Transport Association

Sir, No right-minded person or organisation should fail to cherish the beauty and wildlife of the English country-

side. The protesters at the site of the Newbury bypass do not have an exclusive appreciation of these issues. But sometimes a compromise with our natural environment is necessary.

Comfort, prosperity, and the preservation of a pleasant environment are heavily dependent on a prosperous and dynamic economy. British industry is dependent on efficient and economic transport and distribution if it is to compete with its European neighbours.

Newbury is a strategic bottleneck — with the vast majority of the local community suffering the consequences and wanting an early resolution. The consultative process has been pursued to the utmost and every aspect of the problem considered long and hard.

The decision has been made and the road should be built without further wasteful and costly delay.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID C. GREEN,
Director General,
The Freight Transport Association,
Hermes House, St John's Road,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.
January 19.

From Mr J. A. Castle

Sir, You appear to imply (report, January 17) that businesses in Newbury are against building the bypass. In fact many, particularly the larger ones, support it.

It is hardly surprising that the protesters are being rewarded with most of the media coverage, when the daily events around this town are little more than a co-ordinated circus act. This corner of Berkshire and Hampshire is being turned into a rural environmental slum by the hordes of unwanted visitors whose only intention is to cause trouble. The great majority of us would like to see the bypass completed and the area returned to a normal existence.

Yours sincerely,
JACK CASTLE,
The Grove,
North End, Newbury, Berkshire.

Styles of protest

From Mr Alastair Mitchell

Sir, While contrasting the Government's willingness to defy Brussels over a drug for gamblers, but not live animal exports, Leonora Digby Smith (letter, January 18) might like to ponder the apparent effectiveness of reasoned argument in comparison with violent protest.

Yours faithfully,
ALASTAIR MITCHELL,
50 Northumberland Avenue,
Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne.
January 19.

Occupational health

From the Director General of the British Occupational Health Research Foundation

Sir, Your report (January 16) of Judge John Stephenson finding for a group of coal-miners wishing to pursue claims for industrial injury against British Coal for vibration white finger (VWF) draws attention to the overall issue of occupational ill-health.

VWF and other occupation-related diseases account for astounding levels of financial cost and personal misery, estimated in the UK alone to affect two million people every year, to be responsible for up to 25 per cent of all absences from work (or 13 million lost working days) and to cost the equivalent of 5 per cent of all UK company profits.

VWF is a distressing physical illness suffered by many past and present users of vibrating machinery. It is one of several occupational illnesses into which research, sponsored by this

foundation and others, is currently being undertaken.

Repetitive strain injury, noise-induced hearing loss and now VWF have achieved high levels of recognition, but other occupational hazards such as asthma, eczema, musculoskeletal disorders and, increasingly, stress, are equally serious.

The general wellbeing, health and safety of employees are now fundamental objectives of all conscientious employers. With the support of a growing number of companies this foundation aims — through improved knowledge, education and screening — to minimise or eliminate risk, to overcome many aspects of work-related sickness and to make tomorrow's workplace safer.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID MCWILLIAM,
Director General,
British Occupational Health
Research Foundation,
9 Millbank, SW1.
January 19.

Hospital future

From the Chairman of Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow Health Authority

Sir, The plans for Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital to build a unit at Hammersmith Hospital and combine it with the latter's maternity unit (article, January 16; letter, January 19) are intended to protect and enhance Queen Charlotte's.

Many less prestigious maternity centres now offer accommodation which is more modern and comfortable than Queen Charlotte's.

By moving onto the Hammersmith Hospital site Queen Charlotte's research opportunities will be enhanced.

This will increase the opportunities to tackle complex problems and bring important benefits in the NHS and internationally.

The plan has the strong support of medical and other senior staff of both Queen Charlotte's and Hammersmith Hospital. They recognise that this change is needed if the pre-eminence of the hospital's services, teaching and research are to be maintained.

Yours faithfully,
ECCLES OF MOULTON,
Chairman,
Ealing, Hammersmith and
Hounslow Health Authority,
1 Armstrong Way,
Southall, Middlesex.
January 19.

As seen on...

From Mrs Kathy Stevenson

Sir, Far from being a matter for praise and congratulations (report and leading article, January 22), the policy adopted by the National Trust (and others) of using the buildings and locations that "star" in film and television to bolster their income through the tourist industry should in fact be of great concern.

It is alarming enough that people can frequently only be encouraged to read works of literature once they have had a visual image firmly implanted in their minds, thus depriving them of the pleasure of intimacy which only their own imaginations can bring to these works; but increasingly the parameters between fact and fiction —

the "new marriage" you refer to — are becoming ever more hazy.

Escapism is one thing, but losing sight of the reality of our historical and literary inheritance is another.

Instead of protecting this inheritance, the National Trust is in effect creating theme parks: surely a task better left to Disney?

Yours faithfully,
KATHY STEVENSON,
74 Kensington Park Road,
Notting Hill, W11.
January 22.

Letters that are intended for publication should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046.

Data protection rules at fault

From Dr Brian D. Keighley

Sir, I cannot be the only representative of a small organisation who is infuriated by the three-yearly demand from the Data Protection agency for a fee of £75 to continue registration. I understand totally that there needs to be regular income for fulfilment of statutory functions, but it is patently unfair for my medical practice of two doctors to pay the same unified fee as major companies or large government agencies.

The DP registrar, Elizabeth France, and her predecessor, have been unable to implement reform in the shape of a stratified fee because of flaws in the primary legislation conferring the agency's powers. However, in July 1995 the EU General Data Protection Directive came into force and fresh legislation must be enacted in each member state within three years of that date.

This gives the UK an opportunity to change the arrangements so that my practice will not be charged the same fee as Marks & Spencer or the Ministry of Defence. I believe such a change would be welcomed by all small organisations, the registrar herself, and all those interested in fairness in the application of a necessary charge.

Yours etc,
BRIAN D. KEIGHLEY,
The Clinic, Buchanan Street,
Balfour, Stirlingshire,
January 14.

Auld and true

From Mr Alistair Sharp

Sir, Robert Burns, a prolific letter-writer, would surely have been delighted that the Royal Mail's special set of stamps being issued on January 25 to celebrate his work are prompting letters to *The Times* (January 23).

The Royal Mail recognises the fact that Burns was not the originator of the song, *Auld Lang Syne*. Probably the earliest version of the song, *Auld Kynodes foreyit*, was published in 1568.

However, no version that comes close to Burns's has ever been found, so it is generally agreed it should be attributed to him. The letter to George Thomson (September 1793) does make it clear that Burns took the words down from "an old man singing", as your correspondent, Mr Mitchell, says, but virtually every line was reworked. Ironically, however, the opening line used on the 50p stamp, "Should auld acquaintance be forgot", is one of the few which remained unchanged.

The concept of the set of four stamps is to use the first lines of works made famous by Burns, to illustrate the diversity of his legacy. By reworking a traditional song Burns created what has become a universal anthem, and we think it is fitting for the song to be featured on a stamp which has an overseas postage rate.

Yours faithfully,
ALISTAIR SHARP
(Head of Philatelic Marketing),
Royal Mail,
Finsbury Square, EC2A 1NL.
January 23.

Snowboarding princes

From Mr Robt Sonderegger

Sir, Snowboarders here in Klosters were most impressed that the Prince of Wales and Prince Harry broke away from the tradition of skiing to try snowboarding ("All aboard for the new sensation", Weekend, January 13). As their instructor that day I would dispute that "snowboarders were appalled" that they did it in ski boots.

It is true that most experienced snowboarders wear soft boots, but I and many other professionals urge most beginners to start with hard boots or ski boots.

At that level the difference is practically unnoticeable, and hard boots offer beginners more support, more control and less risk of ankle injury. Leaning forward on snowboards is one of the hardest things for beginners and the design of ski boots can help with this.

The ski boots of the Prince of Wales hardly hindered him from picking up the sport. I was most impressed at his confidence and posture. Riding snowboards which, contrary to your report, can go much faster than skis, requires guts and a sense of adventure, especially for the not so young. I give the Prince of Wales and his incredibly fast-learning son (who was also wearing ski boots) great praise for their performance.

Thank you, and very best wishes,
ROBT SONDEREGGER,
Ski and Snowboardschule Saas,
Landstrasse 15,
7252 Klosters Dorf,
Switzerland.
January 19.

Back soon?

From Mr Norman E. Bagshaw

Sir, My geography teacher used to say that the sirocco returns every year. As a loyal customer and shareholder of Forte, I look forward to Sir Rocco's return to the hotel scene.

Yours etc,
NORMAN BAGSHAW,
59 Clement Road, Marple Bridge,
Stockport, Greater Manchester.
January 23.



COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM, NORFOLK

January 24: The Queen, Honorary Air Commodore, this morning visited Royal Air Force Marham and was received by the Station Commander (Group Captain John Broadbent).

Her Majesty met station personnel and their families and local schoolchildren before opening the new Aircraft Refinishing Facility. The Queen afterwards attended a Reception for All Ranks and civilians in the Sergeants' Mess and honoured the Station Commander with a presence at Luncheon in the Officers' Mess.

This afternoon Her Majesty observed station personnel carrying out exercises in response to a simulated attack.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

January 24: The Prince Edward, Chairman, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Special Projects Group, this evening held a meeting at Buckingham Palace.

His Royal Highness, Past President, the Lord's Taverners, later attended the Umpires' Dinner at the London Hilton, Park Lane, London W1.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

January 24: The Princess Royal, Colonel-in-Chief, The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment, today visited the 1st Battalion at Lockport Barracks, Tidworth, Hampshire.

Her Royal Highness this afternoon arrived at Royal Air Force Aldergrove and was received by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (Sir David Feil).

The Princess Royal, President, Save the Children Fund, this evening attended a Private Appeal Dinner at Hillsborough Castle.

KENSINGTON PALACE

January 24: The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon, Patron, today visited London Lighthouse, Lancaster Road, London, W11, for the launch of the programme of events to mark its tenth anniversary year.

YORK HOUSE

ST JAMES'S PALACE
January 24: The Duke of Kent, Vice-Chairman, British Overseas Trade Board, today presented the Lord's Taverners' Chamber of Commerce Scroll of Appreciation to Mr Paul Cuvors at York House, St James's Palace, London SW1.

Birthdays today

The Rev Professor G.W. Anderson, theologian, 83; Mrs Cary Aquino, former President of the Philippines, 63; Sir Tom Arnold, MP, 44; Mr Raymond Baxter, writer and broadcaster, 74; Viscount Blakenham, 58; the Most Rev Dermot Clifford, Archbishop of Cashel and Emly, 57; Vice-Admiral Sir David Clutburck, 83; the Earl of Coventry, 62; Miss Emma Freud, broadcaster, 34; Sir Paul Girolami, former chairman, Glaxo Holdings, 70; Mr Brian Hayes, Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police, 50; Lord Illife, 88; Professor G.E.R. Lloyd, Master, Darwin College, Cambridge, 63; Sir James Mellon, diplomat, 67; Sir David Nicholas, former chairman and chief executive, ITN, 66; Lord Nicholas of Birkbeck, 63; Mr William O'Brien, MP, 67; Air Commodore A.A. Reed, former director, RAF Nursing Services, 60; Mr David Shute, Chief Constable, Avon and Somerset, 60; Mr Tom Shetland, director, the Prince's Trust, and the Royal Jubilee Trusts, 44; Miss Angela Thorne, actress, 57; Professor Edward Ullendorff, former Professor of Ethiopian Studies, 76; Admiral Sir Peter White, 77.

Royal engagements

The Princess Royal, as President of the British Olympic Association, will attend the Midlands division dinner for the British Olympic appeal at the Sports and Social complex of Vauxhall Motors, Luton, at 7.30.

The Duke of Gloucester, as Patron of the Panemakers' Company, will attend the annual dinner at the Mansion House at 7.20.

The Duchess of Gloucester will attend a reception given by the British College of Optometrists at Guildhall, at 7.15, to mark the granting of a Royal Charter of Incorporation.

Luncheon

Lord Gould, President of the International Copyright Identity Group and Chairman of Court, Strathclyde University, was the host at a luncheon held yesterday at the House of Lords to mark the launch of ICIG. Mr Clive Chappell and Professor Stephen Grey of Harvard Business School also spoke.

Lectures

Barbican's Rosemary Rosemary delivered the Sir Lionel Denny lecture, sponsored by the Barbican Company, at the Museum of London last night. Professor Donald Barlow, Master, presided, assisted by Mr R.R.C. Bloomfield, Upper Warden, and Mr A.J.B. Missen, Middle Warden.

Institution of Mechanical Engineers
Mr Charles Betts delivered the annual Thomas Lowe Gray lecture yesterday at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. Mr F. Chris Price, president, was in the chair.

Dinner

Chartered Accountants' Company
Mr J.M. Renshall, Master of the Chartered Accountants' Company, assisted by Mr W.S.C. Richards, Senior Warden, and Mr G.H. Kingsmill, Junior Warden, presided at the winter dinner held last night at Drapers' Hall. Sir David Walker, the Senior Warden and Mr Daniel Hudson also spoke. The Town Clerk and Chamberlain, City of London Corporation, and the Masters of the Solicitors' Master Mariners' and Upholders' Companies were among the guests.

Coningsby Club

The Hon Peter Brooke, CH, MP, presided at a dinner of the Coningsby Club held last night at the Carlton Club. Mr Jeremy Hunt, chairman, and members of the committee, were the hosts. Mr Max Hastings, Editor of the *Evening Standard*, was the guest of honour and speaker.

Uppingham School

The Chapel Choir will perform the Requiem in Westminster Abbey on Sunday, February 4, at 5.30pm. Former pupils and other friends of the school are welcome to attend. Tickets are not required.

Today's events

The Queen's Life Guard mounts at Horse Guards at 11.00.



Trafalgar Square, once under threat from dry rot and developers, will become a venue for rehearsal and concerts

Country house reborn as home of opera

By MARCUS BINNEY
ARCHITECTURE
CORRESPONDENT

THE country house a grateful nation gave to the family of the hero of Trafalgar has been bought by an opera impresario, Michael Wade, plans to use Trafalgar Park, near Salisbury, as a centre to nurture young singers and musicians after they leave college.

Mr Wade said: "My plan is to encourage companies to use the house for their annual weekend retreats and to sponsor public concerts. This way the sponsors will meet the singers and musicians which they rarely do and ticket prices will be kept down."

Mr Wade wants to create a 250-seat concert hall in the north wing and eventually to

vest the house in a music trust. An inaugural concert at the weekend by Opera Interludes in the rococo hall was attended by guests including Sir Edward Heath, Richard Baker and Jilly Cooper.

On Nelson's death in 1805,



Wade: hopes to create 250-seat concert hall

his immediate heir was his elder brother the Rev William Nelson, who succeeded him as Duke of Brontë and was created Earl Nelson of Trafalgar. The gift of Trafalgar to the Nelson family in 1814 parallels the grant of the royal manor of Woodstock to the Duke of Marlborough and the Stratfield Saye estate to the Duke of Wellington.

After the ruinous expense of building Blenheim Palace at Woodstock, Parliament shied away from providing a grand new mansion for either Wellington or Nelson and instead purchased the Standlynch estate south of Salisbury, with an imposing mid-18th century pink brick house with large flanking wings in the manner of the architect James Gibbs.

According to *Country Life*: "No lovelier situation could

have been chosen." Pronouncing the name of the house in the same way as Trafalgar Square in London raises eyebrows in Wiltshire where the gar rhythms with car. After the Nelson family sold Trafalgar in 1948, the house was separated from the surrounding estate and left with only seven acres of land. The north wing was eaten up by dry rot and developers were seeking permission to build in the grounds when Mr Wade bought the house late last year.

Proposing a vote of thanks at the inaugural concert, Sir Edward Heath recalled: "My love of opera was born when I first saw *Carmen* in Paris aged 13. In the next box was a very beautiful lady whose shoulder strap slipped a little further with every dramatic turn in the plot."

Child cemetery tells grim tale

By NORMAN HAMMOND, ARCHAEOLOGY CORRESPONDENT

DOZENS of dead babies, found among the ruins of a Roman villa, may have been victims of an ancient epidemic of Anemia and malaria are both possible causes of the deaths, which occurred 1,500 years ago in central Italy.

The villa, at Lugnanum in Umbria, was built in the 2nd century and abandoned in the 3rd. Two centuries later its collapsing rooms were used as an infant cemetery, according to Professor David Soren of the University of Arizona and his wife Noelle.

"Forty-seven children were buried amid the partly collapsed walls of five rooms," they say in *Archaeology*. "Twenty-two were fetuses, probably miscarriages, eighteen were newborn, six were four to six months old and one was two or three years old."

Some of the babies were buried in old wine amphorae, others on reused roof tiles. Infant mortality was probably 25-30 per cent in normal times,

and would have soared during epidemics.

"Premature infants appear to have been buried with little or no care," the Sorens say. "Romans believed that children who died before nine days should not be lamented or buried with great ceremony." Most of the babies seem to have been buried within a short period, perhaps only a few days or weeks. The pattern of interment, with single bodies being followed by groups of up to seven, "leads us to believe that a few deaths led to the creation of the cemetery," they say.

"Then more babies died and were mislaid: an epidemic that first struck a few infants and then spread rapidly, killing many and causing women to miscarry. We will know how the adults were affected when we find their cemetery."

Puppies found with some of the burials may have been sacrificed in a ritual intended to calm evil forces: in Roman

times the bereft mother was considered unclean, and the child's soul a dangerous force. A raven's claw and a toad found with other children may have also been intended to ward off spirits.

Study of the bones has shown traces of porotic hyperostosis, a response to anaemia. But malaria was widespread in the 5th century AD - and was still a problem in parts of Italy until the 1950s.

Burnt honeysuckle seeds in the cemetery support the thesis that malaria was the killer. These suggest that the epidemic took place in summer, the peak season for malaria. The herb could have been used in treatment.

"There may be no way to prove our malaria hypothesis with present technology," the Sorens say. "Yet it is clear that something terrible happened to those Umbrian infants that summer in the 5th century."

Source: *Archaeology* 48 No 5: 43-48.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS: St Edmund Campion, Jesuit martyr, London, 1540; Robert Boyle, chemist, Lissmore, Co. Waterford, 1627; Joseph Lagrange, mathematician, Turin, 1736; Robert Burns, poet, Alloway, 1759; Sir Francis Burt, politician, 1770; William McGilivray, naturalist, Old Aberdeen, 1796; John Arbuthnot Fisher, 1st Baron Fisher, admiral of the fleet, Ceylon, 1841; William Somerset Maugham, novelist and dramatist, Paris, 1874; Virginia Woolf, novelist and critic, London, 1879; Wilhelm Furtwängler, conductor, Berlin, 1886; Witold Lutoslawski, composer, Warsaw, 1913.

DEATHS: Robert Burton, author of *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Oxford, 1640; William Shield, composer, London, 1829; Dorothy Wordsworth, writer, Rydal Mount, Grasmere, 1857; Frederick Leighton, President of the Royal Academy 1879-96, Kensington, 1896; King Edward III acceded to the throne, 1327.

The League of Nations was founded, 1919.

Legal appointments

John Graham Boggis, QC, and Fergus Irvine Mitchell to be circuit judges, assigned to the Midland and Oxford Circuit and the South Eastern Circuit respectively.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr J.C.D. Ash and Miss H.C. Briggs

The engagement is announced between Joyn, son of Mr Brian Ash, of Reading, and Mrs Marie Ash, of East Sheen, and Hilary, daughter of Mr and Mrs Michael Briggs, of Eynsham, Oxfordshire.

Mr R.P.C. Bridgeman and Miss A.M. Mowbray

The engagement is announced between Richard, son of Mr and Mrs Robert Bridgeman, of Harpenden, Hertfordshire, and Alice, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs Anthony Mowbray, of Layer Marney, Essex.

Mr J.E. Buckley and Miss E.N. Pybus

The engagement is announced between John, elder son of Mr and Mrs Roger Buckley, of Willaston, Wirral, and Kate, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs William Pybus, of Throleigh, Devon.

Mr D.N.S. Chapman and Miss C.R. Brodie

The engagement is announced between Neville, son of Canon and Mrs Derek Chapman, of Sedlescombe, East Sussex, and Charmian, daughter of the late Mr Stuart Brodie and of Mrs Gillian Brodie, of Little Hedgeholme, Co. Durham.

Mr N. Cox and Miss K.R. Secker

The engagement is announced between Nicholas, son of Professor and Mrs Antony Cox, of Wensley, Derbyshire, and Kitty, daughter of Mr and Mrs Adrian Secker, of Iwer, Buckinghamshire.

Dr D.A. Crane and Mrs J.C. Lister

Dr Denis Crane of Halesbury in Herefordshire and Mrs Julia Lister (née Tibbs) of Lamberhurst in Kent are delighted to announce that they will be marrying in April.

Mr P.R. Gill and Miss S.M. Keane

The engagement is announced between Peter, son of the late Mr David Gill and of Mrs Kenneth Smith, of Melbourne, Victoria, and Susan, daughter of the late Mr John Keane and of Mrs Keane, of Medstead, Hampshire.

Mr S.R. Haslow and Miss L.S.K. Pride

The engagement is announced between Simon, elder son of Captain R.G. Haslow, CBE, RN, and Mrs Haslow, of Liss, Hampshire, and Louise, daughter of Mr and Mrs R.W. Pride, of Stone-In-Oney, Tenterden, Kent.

Mr V.C. Ives and Miss R.M. Teesdale

The engagement is announced between Vaughan, elder son of the late Mr and Mrs Lewis Ives, of Poole, Dorset, and Rosalind, second daughter of Mr and Mrs John Teesdale, of Whitminster, Gloucestershire.

Mr N.P. Storer and Miss C.E. Dove

The engagement is announced between Nicholas, son of Dr and Mrs John Storer, of Blewbury, Oxfordshire, and Carrie, daughter of Mr and Mrs R. Dove, of Falls Church, Virginia, USA.

Mr W.D. Symington and Miss J.P. Booth

The engagement is announced between William, elder son of Mr and Mrs D.A. Symington, of Blewbury, Oxfordshire, and Juliet, daughter of Dr Christopher Booth and of Dr Lavinia Loughridge.

Mr C.J. Williams and Miss M.S. Hamilton

The engagement is announced between Christopher, son of Mrs Claire Williams, of Haslemere, Surrey, and Madeleine, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs Stewart Hamilton, of Hollow Meadows, Sheffield.

Mr P.S. Wolcott and Miss S.L. Harrison

The engagement is announced between Paul, son of Mr and Mrs Norman Wolcott, of Quilo, Ecuador, and Sophie, daughter of Mr and Mrs Roger Harrison, of Ichen Stoke Mill, Alfreton, Derbyshire.

Marriage

Mr R.A.D. Broadhead and Mrs J.H. Smith. The marriage took place in London on January 24, 1996, between Anthony Broadhead and Jill Smith, (née Broadlove).

Church news

Appointments

The Rev Robert Bashford, Assistant Curate, Gillingham, St Michael and Angels (Chelmsford) to be the incumbent, Clapham (St Albans).

The Rev Julia Buterworth, Team Vicar, Wiltshire: St Andrew (Canterbury) to be also an Honorary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral.

The Rev Quentin Chandler, Assistant Curate, Goldington (St Albans) to be Minister of St Peter's, Rushden (Peterborough).

The Rev Jeremy Clark-King, Curate, Ladbroke parish church (Harrow) to be curate, Curate and Assistant Director of Post Ordination Training (Canterbury) to be also an Honorary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral.

The Rev John Hargreaves, Assistant Chaplain General, HM Prison Services to be Rector, St Michael (Lichfield).

The Rev Glen Hodson, Assistant Curate, St Mary, Cogges and St James, South Leigh (Oxford) to be Assistant Curate, St Michael, Bolemore (Birmingham).

The Rev Christopher Hughes, Team Vicar, Wombourne Team Ministry to be Team Rector, Wombourne Team Ministry (Lichfield).

The Rev Ian Johnson, Curate, Evington, Leicester to be Assistant Priest, w. special responsibility for Foster and Family, and Substituted Chaplain, HM Prison, Garret (Leicester).

The Rev David Lavender, Methodist Member of the Central Telford Team Ministry to be Churches Development Officer and Spiritual Officer, Central Telford Team Ministry (Lichfield).

The Rev Brendan Giblin, Assistant Curate, Tadcaster, W. Newton Kyme to be Rector, Stockton-on-the-Forest w. Holby and Warthill (York).

The Rev Penelope Gray-Smith, Assistant Curate, Cannock Team Ministry to be Assistant Chaplain, Stafford District General Hospital (Lichfield).

The Rev Keith Hale, Priest-in-charge, Tankersley and of Thurgoland and Wortley to be Vicar, Tankersley, Thurgoland and Wortley (Sheffield).

The Rev Noelle Hall, Priest-in-charge, St Mary, Sidinglow and Assistant Director of Post Ordination Training (Canterbury) to be also an Honorary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral.

The Rev John Hargreaves, Assistant Chaplain General, HM Prison Services to be Rector, St Michael (Lichfield).

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BMDS: 0171 782 7272
PRIVATE: 0171 481 4000

PERSONAL COLUMN

TRADE: 0171 481 1982
FAX: 0171 481 9313

DEATHS

BARNES/O'BRIEN - Mildred (née O'Brien), 82, died on 23rd January 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

BIRTHS

BANTON - On January 23rd in Oxford, to Amanda and John, a son, John. Family notice.

DALRYMPLE - On January 18th, to James and Mary, a son, James. Family notice.

DAVIES - On 23rd January 1996 at Queen Charlotte's, to Anne and David, a son, David. Family notice.

HEWITT - On January 20th at the Portland Hospital, to Stanley and Carl, a son, Carl. Family notice.

HILLIARY-JAMES - On January 20th at the Portland Hospital, to John and Jane, a son, John. Family notice.

O'CONNOR - On January 17th 1996 at the Portland Hospital, to Debbie and David, a son, David. Family notice.

PARKMAN - On January 22nd, to Kasia and Geoffrey, a son, Geoffrey. Family notice.

PARKER - On January 19th, to Jessica and Robert, a son, Robert. Family notice.

SANDERSON - On 6th January at the Portland Hospital, to Barbara and John, a son, John. Family notice.

SWENNEY - On January 22nd at the Portland Hospital, to Adrian and Mary, a son, Adrian. Family notice.

WILLIAMS - On January 20th at the Portland Hospital, to John and Jane, a son, John. Family notice.

DEATHS

DAWSON - John Trevor "Gerry" on Tuesday 23rd January, 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

DEATHS

EVERLEY - On January 19th, Eleanor, 82, died on 19th January 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

BLACK - On January 22nd, to John and Jane, a son, John. Family notice.

CLARKE - On January 20th at the Portland Hospital, to John and Jane, a son, John. Family notice.

FITZ - On January 19th, to Jessica and Robert, a son, Robert. Family notice.

HEWITT - On January 20th at the Portland Hospital, to Stanley and Carl, a son, Carl. Family notice.

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WILLIAMS - On January 20th at the Portland Hospital, to John and Jane, a son, John. Family notice.

DEATHS

JONES - On 23rd January 1996, Elizabeth (née Jones), 82, died on 23rd January 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

DEATHS

PROTHERO - Dorothy Nellie, 100, died on 23rd January 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

RYLAND - Nancy Pamela of Fleetville, Bromsgrove, on January 23rd 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

TAYLOR - Major General Raymond, on Monday 22nd January 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

WILLIS - Frances Monica (née Willis), wife of the late Anthony Willis, died on 23rd January 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

WILSON - On January 23rd 1996, at the Portland Hospital, to John and Jane, a son, John. Family notice.

WILSON - On January 20th at the Portland Hospital, to John and Jane, a son, John. Family notice.

WILSON - On January 19th, to Jessica and Robert, a son, Robert. Family notice.

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WILSON - On January 20th at the Portland Hospital, to John and Jane, a son, John. Family notice.

DEATHS

ROBERTSON - On 23rd January 1996, Elizabeth (née Robertson), 82, died on 23rd January 1996, after a long illness. Buried at St. Mary's, Clapham. Family notice.

DEATHS

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WILSON - On January 19th, to Jessica and Robert, a son, Robert. Family notice

THE EARL OF WARWICK

David Robin Francis Grey, Greville was born in Warwick Castle, the son of the 7th Earl and his first wife. His father had been a romantic society figure, with dashing, dark good looks, and he had briefly lived in Hollywood with the intention of making a film career. His son — given the courtesy title of Lord Brookeborough and forever after known as Brookeborough — followed his father to Eton. He inherited the 70th Earl's looks and charm, and his name regularly appeared in the gossip columns of the 1950s. Princess Margaret attended his 21st birthday party in 1955 at Warwick, when the entire castle was lit by flickering candles. Every artificial light from the battlements to the moat was switched off.

Brooke studied accounting in the City as a young man and in 1956 married Sarah, daughter of the copper magnate Alfred Chester Beatty. They had a son and daughter before he was killed in a car accident in 1967. The following year, almost a decade after his father had made the castle over to him and left the country as a tax exile, Brooke moved into the castle. Up until that point the castle's visitors had had the run of the place almost to themselves.

The issue of visitors was one of the most reasonable arguments

CHARLES MADGE

The young Muhammad Sultan, who changed his name to Sultan Rahi only later, had a cinematic passion that was quite unstoppable. After finishing school, he ventured to Lahore, the home of Pakistani cinema, in the hope of finding the employment of his choice. There, he spent 15 years doing odd jobs for film-wallahs and sometimes landing the part of an extra.

It was not until 1971, when he was 33, that he secured the sort of role for which he had come to Lahore. In Iqbal Kashmiri's *Bahul*. A year later, Rahi took the country by storm: in a film called *Bashira*, he played a rural thug who in the end redeems himself, in a scene which ordinary Punjabis greatly enjoyed, by stabbing to death a brutal landlord.

If that film won for Rahi the following of the Punjabi peasantry, *Maula Jai* (1979) secured their adoration forever. This film, perhaps the most important in the history of Pakistani cinema for it ensured that the Punjabi language clichés in Urdu at the cinema, and the major cinematic medium for every existing record at the box office. It ran in Lahore's cinemas for five years.

Rahi played the eponymous character, who represents all that is good and honest, his duels in the film with the Sindhia actor, Mustafa Qureshi, who here played the evil "Nuri" Nakh, has passed into Pakistani folklore. One of Rahi's lines from the film was recited by many of those who mourned his death: "*Maula nu maula na mare te maula nai marda*".

Playing on the word "Maula", which, in addition to being the character's name, is also the Punjabi synonym for God, the line says that "Only God can kill Maula". It was this indestructibility that won him his legions, as well as his charitable work and lifelong devotion to Islam.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

PERSONAL COLUMN

and through donations to the
for 'Chiefly'.
e to help the whole RAF family,
as ex-RAF, their spouses and
ation now and remembering

[illegible]

to be made on a large scale at a longer distance from their affairs the German newspapers and critics will cease their gibes whilst Fleet being condemned to afraid to leave its ports. One dread cruiser sunk and two battleships damaged are fairly good; our seamen are on the alert and ready to give the enemy an or showing what they are made of. It is not clear if we are not told exactly where the sailing squadrons met the German, as assumed, since it was in the night, that the latter intended to sail along the English coast, and was probably in the neighbourhood of the Dover Straits.

much they were inclined to throw upon the English church-goers on shore, they were in no fettle to do so. Sir David Beatty says in his turned at once and made for home.

we know of other battles at sea, but at which fire is opened, it is at something near 10 miles. The squadrons when this happened.

NEWS

Major seeks elections for Ulster

John Major announced plans for early elections to a Northern Ireland assembly as a new road to peace after an international commission said the paramilitaries would never bow to his demand that they give up their guns before being admitted to all-party talks.

The move, which could lead to elections by May, was greeted angrily by nationalists. John Hume of the SDLP accused the Prime Minister of buying Unionist votes. Pages 1, 8, 9

Blair crushes revolt over Harman

Harriet Harman was safely entrenched in her Shadow Cabinet job after a fighting Commons attack against the Conservatives and a striking display of Tony Blair's mastery over his party. The Labour leader crushed a party revolt against the Shadow Health Secretary. Pages 1, 11

Tory hope

The Tories have climbed to their highest position in the polls for over two years even before Labour's rows over the Harriet Harman have had time to affect public opinion. Page 1

Sarah ward of court

Sarah Cook, the 13-year-old who with her parents' blessing 'married' a Turkish waiter she met on a family holiday, was made a ward of court. Page 1

Prince's opinion

The Prince of Wales, in a stinging criticism of plans to celebrate the millennium, says that the marking of the new century is in danger of becoming a giant but meaningless party with no spiritual significance. Page 1

Princess's adviser

The Princess of Wales has appointed a businesswoman with a passion for amateur dramatics and cordon bleu cookery as her public relations adviser. Page 2

Sex case teacher free

A music teacher accused of giving sexual favours to under-age boys walked free after a judge accepted that although there was a clear case against her it would be unfair to proceed. Page 3

Warmer Antarctica

Ice sheets in Antarctica are disappearing as rising temperatures appear to confirm fears of global warming. Page 4

'It's unreal' says novel winner

The surprise winner of the Whitbread Book of the Year award, Kate Atkinson, won the support of eight of the nine judges for her first novel, *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*. Ms Atkinson, 44, has been turned from a struggling writer into a literary star by the £21,000 award. She said: "I didn't sleep. I kept thinking 'my goodness me'. It's a bit unreal." Page 3

Cathedral charge

The Roman Catholic Church was accused by English Heritage of deliberately letting St Mary's Old Cathedral, Middlesbrough, fall into ruin. Page 6

Wealth gap narrows

The gap between rich and poor, which widened during the Thatcherite 1980s, has remained almost constant during the economic slowdown. Page 10

Santer pressure

Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission, tried to silence the growing chorus of doubt over European monetary union. Page 12

House 'forgery'

Kiko Nakahara, a British resident, has been arrested by French police and charged with forgery and breach of trust after allegedly buying 15 historic properties and stripping them of their contents. Page 13

Firing squad

Tonight, John Albert Taylor, a convicted murderer and rapist, is due to be strapped to a chair in a converted warehouse beneath Utah's Wasatch Mountains and shot through the heart by five anonymous marksmen. Page 14

Clinton triumph

Disgruntled Republicans accused President Clinton of purloining the best issues with a clever State of the Union speech. Page 15



Joanna Lumley cuddles Babe, a piglet named after the hit film, to launch a campaign to end exports of live animals in Europe.

BUSINESS

Jobs: Short Brothers, the Belfast company, put 1,500 workers on three-months' notice of redundancy in case efforts to rescue Dutch plane-maker Fokker fail. Page 23

Belling: A solicitor and a former nut and bolts salesman were found guilty of defrauding the ill-fated cooker maker and some of Europe's largest companies, in a £13 million operation. Page 23

Rebates: Bradford & Bingley, the seventh largest building society, cut its mortgage rate to 7.24 as part of a scheme to return £50 million in improved rates. Page 23

Markets: The FT-SE 100 rose 5.8 to 3754.2. Sterling rose from \$2.8 to \$2.9 after a rise from \$1.5105 to \$1.5147 and from DM2.2351 to DM2.2354. Page 26

SPORT

Rugby union: Paul Sampson, an 18-year-old schoolboy from Yorkshire, was included in England's training squad for the international against Wales. Page 44

Tennis: Andre Agassi recovered from two sets down against Jim Courier to reach the men's singles semi-finals at the Australian Open. His opponent will be Michael Chang. Page 44

Football: Manchester United and AC Milan have agreed to work together on mutual interests, such as a European super league and transfer links. Page 40

Snooker: The decline of Alex Higgins seems irreversible after his elimination from the Embassy world championship and his petulant behaviour. Page 39

Stars in combat: In an excellent new thriller, *Heat*, Al Pacino and Robert De Niro are on opposite sides of the law. Also reviewed today: Harrison Ford in *Sabrina*; Whitney Houston in *Waiting to Exhale*; and the fine new Pedro Almodovar film, *The Flower of my Secret*. Page 31

Disarmament: In America even the most famous orchestras are in financial trouble. Page 33

Mimed abuse: At the London Mime Festival, the latest offering is *Paper Walls*, a gripping and intelligent response to abuse inside the family. Page 33

Pounitney triumph: British director David Pounitney has scored a triumph in Munich with his new production of *Aida*. Page 33

Play R again John: What makes America laugh — and why is John Cleese having to shoot a new end for *Fierce Creatures*? Page 17

First family: Susanna Agnelli, sister of Gianni, and Italy's first female Foreign Minister. Page 17

Sperm wars: A woman who has an affair is more likely to conceive, and the fittest sperm will fertilise her egg and produce successful children. Page 16

BOOKS

Past and present: Peter Ackroyd studies Coleridge; Bruce Boucher on Salvador Rosi; Roger Scruton on a man with quality; Andrew Roberts on *Elizabeth*. Pages 34, 35

TRAVEL

Rooms cost more: Granada is expected to raise prices at the hotels it has just bought. Page 36

THE WORLD

A long-term worry for Mr Blair is that if his education policy can unravel quite so rapidly the moment it is put to some sort of a test, what other ill-thought-out policies are equally in jeopardy? — *The Birmingham Post*

The Turkish media have a point when they say we are hypocritical. We issue the pill to 13-year-olds. Is our indignation about Miss Cook caused by this man being a Turk? — *Evening Standard*

Preview: Meet the Sweeney, 1990s style. *Thief Takers* (TV, 9.00pm). **Review:** Matthew Bond is *University Challenged*. Page 43

NATURAL SELECTION

If Labour is serious about decentralisation, it should allow parents to decide periodically whether they want comprehensive schools or selection. Page 19

STATE OF THE PRESIDENT

The lines are drawn between two strikingly different political visions. Americans seem destined for a fascinating battle. Page 19

Rin Tin Tin's tin

British supermarkets are baring their fangs, over the major matter of pabulum for pets. Page 19

PAUL BEW

Ston Fein's Gerry Adams has spared the immediate embarrassment of having to accept that the present partition of the island has a democratic basis. To that extent, his leadership has been strengthened. But this is only a postponement of what is an inevitably evil day. Page 18

KENNETH BAKER

Sporn wars: A woman who has an affair is more likely to conceive, and the fittest sperm will fertilise her egg and produce successful children. Page 16

RACHEL CUSK

It is hard to get the boorishness of beer out of the Book of the Year. If Whitbread knew anything about books, it surely would not line them up like so many beauty queens in a judging process by necessity unfair and superficial. Page 18

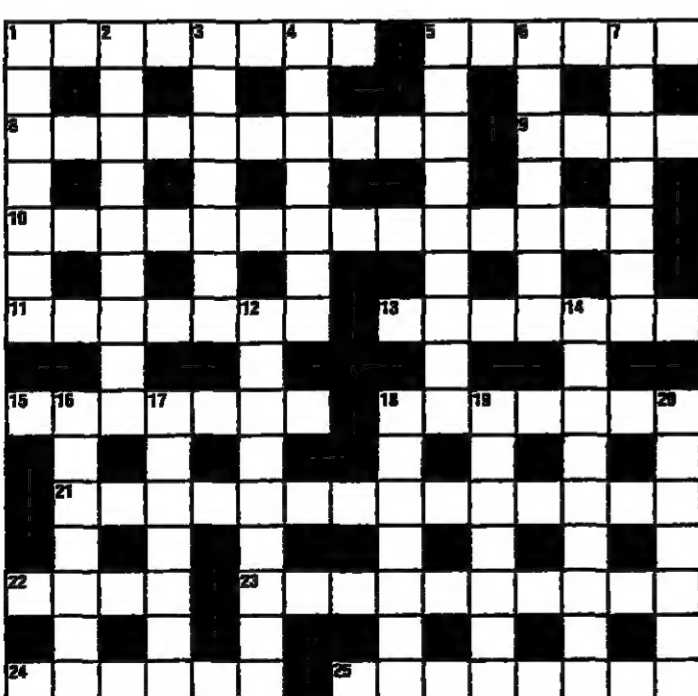
JOHN BRYANT

National Lottery grants can now be paid directly to individual sportsmen and women but the real test will be to make sure they go to the deserving Cinderellas and not the Ugly Sisters already bloated with sponsorship. Page 42

ERIC BRIANT, Education Officer of the ILEA; the 8th Earl of Warwick; Sultan Rabi, Pakistani film actor; Charles Madge, poet and sociologist. Page 21

Short-termism; Newbury bypass; data protection. Page 19

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,073



ACROSS

- 1 Put one's name on column in travel guide (8).
- 5 The conceit of Lord Peter when speaking (6).
- 8 Strengthen Spanish port in popular esteem (10).
- 9 Pit for collection of oils (4).
- 10 Childish game an editor might suggest (10-2-6).
- 11 Vain, yet floundering in inexperience (7).
- 13 Porter turning cross with employee (7).
- 15 Spanish gentleman covered up disturbance in goal (7).
- 18 Refuse salesman university place for economics (7).
- 21 Uniting to annoy one engaged in making woolies (8-6).
- 22 Fingered cloth (4).
- 23 Unlocks with key — duplicate that's said to get you in (4,6).

DOWN

- 2 Chop-stick (6).
- 25 Printed letters found in the usual parts (8).
- 1 Freeze — one with very loud gun is around (7).
- 2 Provided lecturer, initially, with generous form of tenure (9).
- 3 Feature a boxer recognizes, say (3-4).
- 4 Milling crowd on fringes of party getting drink (7).
- 5 We ask about love — individual is forlorn (9).
- 6 Sort of dealings that can produce nothing short of derision (7).
- 7 A sailor enjoying recreation in sunny places (7).
- 12 Firm line taken in balancing act (9).
- 14 Give me old-fashioned stuff, a sensational entertainment (9).
- 16 Literary people used to come here for a dip (3-4).
- 17 Strange attire a small number designed for the opera (7).
- 18 A temporary ruling for style of architecture (7).
- 19 Start in priory, and go back to be prior (7).
- 20 Lead, for example, a resistance unit (7).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,072

DELECTABLE BUNCH
U O L O A I
PERCULATOR SNUG
E I C R T S H
INCH ROUGHODIAL
S E I P E L
PARASITE PONT
PLAY W R H
INFLU RELEVANT
L A R R A T M S
SALESTALK IGS
P L E P N C E
O R E Y L I K E M I N D E D
R U E S A E D
LOVS PRESENTIARY

Times Two Crossword, page 44

TIMES WEATHERCALL

For the latest region by region forecasts, 24 hours in advance, dial 081 500 followed by the appropriate code.

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East Midlands	707
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West Midlands & Severn	709
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AA ROADWATCH

For the latest AA roadwatch information, 24 hours a day, dial 0300 401 followed by the appropriate code.

AA Roadwatch: Areas within M25: 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800.

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday, highest day temp: Jersey, 11°C; lowest day temp: Bodan, Germany, -1°C; highest night temp: Tokyo, Japan, 10°C; lowest night temp: Moscow, Russia, -20°C.

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FORECAST

General: much of England and Wales will have light snow flurries today. The East Coast and hilly areas will be the most vulnerable places. The South West is likely to have a little rain or sleet. The brightest weather will be in northwestern parts.

Scotland and Northern Ireland: will have a breezy day. Scattered snow showers across eastern districts, the far north and on hills are likely to become frequent later. Western parts are likely to have a brighter day.

London, SE England, E Anglia, E England: mainly cloudy, some light snow flurries. Wind east to northeast, fresh, occasionally strong. Cold in wind. Max 10°C (34°F).

Central S England, E Midlands, W Midlands, S Wales, N Wales, Central N England: mainly cloudy, some brighter spells; scattered snow flurries. Wind east to northeast, fresh. Cold in wind. Max 10°C (34°F).

Channel Isles, SW England: cloudy, some patchy rain or sleet. Wind east, fresh to strong. Cold in wind. Max 9°C (30°F).

NE England, Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, Central Highlands, Moray Firth, NE Scotland: cloudy, some light snow showers, becoming more frequent later. Wind east, fresh, occasionally strong. Cold in wind. Max 2°C (36°F).

Orkney, Shetland: snow showers, heavy at times. Wind southeast to east, strong, occasionally near gale. Cold in wind. Max 4°C (39°F).

Outlook: snow showers, becoming rain in South on Saturday; bright in North West.

AROUND BRITAIN YESTERDAY

24 hrs to 5 pm: b = bright; c = cloud; d = drizzle; dc = drizzle & cloud; f = fog; g = gale; h = hail; r = rain; sh = shower; s = sleet; ss = sleet & snow; st = storm; t = thunder.

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Wind	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Aberdeen	11	0.1	3	37	c	11	0.1
Anglo	11	0.1	3	37	c	11	0.1
Avon	17	0.1	3	37	c	17	0.1
Belfast	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Birmingham	10	0.09	1	34	d	10	0.09
Bristol	18	0.14	6	43	b	18	0.14
Cardiff	10	0.3	3	30	dc	10	0.3
Canterbury	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Chichester	10	0.3	3	38	f	10	0.3
Colchester	10	0.23	3	39	fg	10	0.23
Cornwall	10	0.3	3	36	dc	10	0.3
Croydon	10	0.02	2	36	c	10	0.02
Durham	10	0.1	1	34	c	10	0.1
Edinburgh	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Exeter	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Gloucester	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Hereford	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Leeds	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Leicester	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Liverpool	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Luton	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Manchester	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Marlow	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Medford	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Metropolitan	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Monmouth	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Murphy	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Norwich	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Nottingham	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Oxford	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Peterborough	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Plymouth	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Portsmouth	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Reading	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Sheffield	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
Southampton	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Helier	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. John's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Peter's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Vincent	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
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St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
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St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
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St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
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St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. George's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. James	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Mark's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St. Paul's	10	0.1	3	37	c	10	0.1
St							